



1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20004

May 18, 2015

The Honorable Christian Mitchell
Illinois House of Representatives
260-W Stratton Office Building
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Representative Mitchell:

We understand that SB7 will be considered at a hearing of the House Elementary & Secondary Education: School Curriculum & Policies Committee, and ask that you submit this letter for the record in lieu of testimony. We thank you for your continued leadership on the goal of preventing injuries involving kids playing organized sports in Illinois, specifically for your support in the House for SB 7, the "Youth Sports Concussion Act." We strongly support these efforts, in addition to the legislation passed in 2014 requiring that coaches be certified that they have received education on how to recognize the signs and symptoms of a concussion. This new, tougher legislation will cement Illinois as a national leader in youth sports safety.

In Safe Kids' 2014 report "Changing the Culture of Youth Sports," we reported that in an average year, 1.24 million kids are seen in emergency rooms for sports injuries—that's 3,397 every day. Among those injuries, 200,000 visits were for concussion-related injuries, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)—representing a 60% increase in emergency room visits for TBIs over the past 10 years.

The Illinois High School Association's (IHSA) adoption of a "return-to-play" (RTP) rule for high school athletes was an important step, but the data and headlines dictate that more needs to be done. Thus, we are strongly supportive of SB 7 as amended which would make the IHSA's RTP rule a matter of state law as well as:

- Apply RTP protocols to all kids, in all grades, participating in any youth sports activities, including those sponsored by public, private, and charter schools in Illinois;
- Require schools to establish a "return to learn" protocol, which means that students who have sustained concussions are afforded for formal classroom accommodations and monitored by medical and academic staff while in recovery—this is vital because returning to cognitive activity following a TBI can be harmful; and
- Encourage youth sports organizations and park districts to provide educational materials about concussions and head injuries to coaches, game officials, youth athletes and their parents.

Safe Kids Worldwide is a global network of organizations dedicated to protecting kids from unintentional injuries, the number one cause of death to children in the United States. We work with our network of over 500 coalitions in the U.S. and in 25 other countries on child safety issues including sports related injuries such as concussions and others.

For the foregoing reasons, Safe Kids joins the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, the Illinois Athletic Trainers Association, the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and others in strongly supporting SB 7.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Anthony Green".

Anthony Green
Safe Kids Worldwide