

DATE: December 3, 2010
TO: All House Members
FROM: Rep. Tim Briggs
SUBJECT: Proposed legislation - CONCUSSIONS IN YOUTH SPORTS

A study by the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital shows that over 40% of high school athletes who suffer concussions return to action prematurely and risk more severe brain injury. Concussions can significantly impact an individual's ability to move, their balance, speech and reflexes. What may initially be a mild concussion can subsequently become a significantly more serious injury because the athlete is permitted to return to practice or to play in a game. Repeat concussions that happen before a child's brain is recovered from the first drastically increases the risk of long-term problems or even death.

I intend to re-introduce legislation that will require that if an athlete is injured during practice or a game, and may be suspected of suffering a concussion or some other type of head injury, that athlete will be removed from play and can return only once they have provided written approval from an appropriate healthcare professional trained in the evaluation and management of concussions. Further, the legislation will require the Pennsylvania Departments of Health and Education to educate coaches, athletes and parents and guardians of the risks of concussions, and encourages them to utilize materials already developed by the US Centers for Disease Control. This legislation is based on laws that have been enacted in multiple states over the past two years.

This legislation passed the House last session but was not considered in the Senate. This issue has been discussed much recently by the news media, most likely due to the frequent occurrence of concussions in this current football season. It also enjoys the support of many professional health organizations as well as professional sports teams in the state. The legislation has been endorsed by the Pittsburgh Post Gazette, the Philadelphia Inquirer and the Harrisburg Patriot News.

I believe that children can learn many positive lessons from participating in sports. However, I also believe we need to protect them. If you wish to join me in this effort, please contact my legislative assistant, Anne Foreman, at aforeman@pahouse.net or at 705-7011.