

Testimony of Will Dunmore Director of Operations for Mid Maryland Youth Football and Cheer League

*Ways & Means Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
February 26, 2020*

Good afternoon.

Chairwoman Kaiser and all members of the House Ways and Means Committee: Thank you for allowing me to speak today.

The Mid Maryland Youth Football and Cheer League encompasses 15 programs in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Howard County, Frederick county, Prince George's county and Montgomery County. In the 2019 fall season we had 120 teams, 518 certified coaches and 2,424 youth football players.

Mid Maryland has required all our coaches to go through the USA Football Heads Up training since its inception.

For our coaches to be on the roster every year, all head and assistant coaches must go through training that includes the USA Football Heads Up certification program to help them coach the proper techniques to our players.

All our coaches and team administrators must complete online concussion training.

USA Football is the recognized leader in youth football. We follow USA Football's recommended limits on contact in practices during the preseason and in season. **As a league, Mid Maryland is opposed any bill or amendment that contradicts the guidelines offered by the national governing body of our sport, USA Football.**

We continue to modify and adapt our rules to put the safety of our athletes first.

The protective equipment used today is light years ahead of where it was 20 years ago, even 10 years. The knowledge and information is out there, it used to be if you got "dinged" you went to the sideline for a play or 2, cleared your head strapped up and went back out there. now the phrase "When in doubt, sit them out" is embedded into the coaches and parents' heads. Parents and coaches know if a head injury is suspected the player does not return until they have been cleared by a medical professional.

In our 13 years we are very fortunate to have 9 players from our league make it to the NFL. 9 out of 54,000, and that's pretty good! I want to emphasize, we do not play youth football to make it to the NFL. We teach and play youth football to help kids acquire the

skills they will need to be successful in life; hard work, dedication, teamwork, time management, physical activity, performing under pressure, accountability.

In the event it is added, we do not support any amendment to this bill that would **ban tackle for children**. I am not a medical expert, I only read the google alerts I get everyday on concussions in youth sports, I will leave the science to the experts. I do know we are a league mostly of volunteer coaches and directors that care deeply about our kids and would not put them in an activity that was guaranteed to cause them harm. The decision to play youth football or any sport should be left to the parents.

During the peak of youth football in our area from about 2010-2013 we had at least 350 teams and 7100 football players. Today we have half the programs and a third of the players and teams in Mid Maryland. While I don't agree with the reasons many parents have for not allowing their children to play youth football as a parent that is their right and that is the way it should be. The decision to play youth football or any sport should be left to the parents.

Thank you

For the 2019 MMYFCL football season we had 2424 players, 120 teams, 15 organizations

For the 2018 MMYFCL football season we had 2018 players, 103 teams, 15 organizations

For the 2017 MMYFCL football season we had 2373 players, 110 teams, 15 organizations

For the 2016 MMYFCL football season we had 2686 players, 135 teams, 16 organizations

For the 2015 MMYFCL football season we had 3762 players, 191 teams, 19 organizations

For the 2014 MMYFCL football season we had 5985 players, 303 teams, 31 organizations

For the 2013 MMYFCL football season we had 7125 players, 363 teams, 32 organizations

For the 2012 MMYFCL football season we had 7646 players, 391 teams, 34 organizations.

For the 2011 MMYFCL football season we had 7258 players, 363 teams, 31 organizations

For the 2010 MMYFCL football season we had 7312 players, 353 teams, 29 organizations,

For the 2009 MMYFCL football season we had 5868 players, 314 teams, 26 organizations