



## HB343 EDUCATION – PUBLIC SCHOOL ATHLETICS - BASKETBALL

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EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

### OPPOSE

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) opposes **HB343 Education – Public School Athletics – Basketball**. This bill establishes rules for public school athletic schedules for basketball, including the maximum number of games played per week and season, and the number of tournament games played each year. Specifically, a public school basketball team may not play more than two games per week, with an exception to play three games per week twice during the season. The basketball season may consist of a maximum of 22 regular season games. Further, the bill requires each county board of education to decide whether to authorize a team to play in a tournament or showcase. Subject to this authorization, a team may play in up to four tournament games and a number of showcase games as determined by the county board each year, including during a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) evaluation period. Finally, the bill as amended by the House of Delegates prohibits a student from being disciplined for not participating in a game or practice that occurs outside of the school year.

AACPS opposes this bill that makes unnecessary alterations to the administration of public secondary school basketball in the state, infringes on local school system decision making authority, creates inequities among student athletes, and imposes an unfunded mandate on county boards of education.

The AACPS athletic program is viewed as an extension of the child’s total education experience. AACPS adheres to the rules and guidelines established by the Maryland Public Secondary School Athletic Association (MPSSAA). MPSSAA promotes, facilitates, and oversees all interscholastic athletic activities provided for public high school students in the State of Maryland. Accordingly, the Association collaborates with the Maryland State Department of Education and local school systems to carry out its responsibilities.

HB343 makes alterations to public secondary school basketball that are not only unnecessary, but potentially detrimental to the administration of the sport. The purpose of this legislation is to allow student athletes in Maryland to participate in the NCAA evaluation period. However, local education agencies already have the authority to participate in these evaluation periods if they would like. COMAR 13A.06.03.03A.(5) states, “Local school systems may approve the participation of member schools to practice and compete in sanctioned National Federation of High Schools (NFHS) and MPSSAA events outside the defined sport season.” This language was adopted by the State Board of Education in July 2022 and created opportunities for all students in interscholastic athletics to participate safely in a bona fide sanctioned event, including events for the purpose of NCAA recruitment. This regulatory change was made for all sports to ensure opportunities are available for all programs operated by local education agencies. As such, HB343 is unnecessary to ensure student athletes participating in basketball in Maryland are able to partake in the NCAA evaluation period.

Additionally, the bill will result in fewer permissible games for student athletes participating in basketball and the elimination of the state basketball championship tournament, as well as city, county, and conference championships. HB343 permits a maximum of 24 games in a season, consisting of 20 regular season games and 4 tournament games. MPSSAA currently permits a maximum number of 29 games per season, 20 regular season games, 2 optional tournament games, one conference championship, and six state tournament games. HB343 does not authorize teams

to play in state, city, county, or conference championships, and, thus, would eliminate these championship tournaments in Maryland.

Furthermore, HB343 takes away the administrative control of the 24 local education agencies for interscholastic athletics. AACPS opposes legislation that infringes on local school system decision-making authority. HB343 also creates inequities between sports and student athletes in the state by identifying one sport and a single group of athletes to benefit from these changes. AACPS currently offers 23 sports and only two would benefit from the opportunities outlined in this bill – boys' and girls' basketball. Legislation of this nature is precedent setting and could lead to additional legislation to address the administration of other high school sports, thus prioritizing certain sports over others and creating inequity among student athletes.

Finally, this bill would create an unfunded mandate for local education agencies. This bill will result in increased expenditures to cover additional coaching stipends, general supervision and oversight, building security, transportation, and potentially increased liability to allow teams to play outside of the winter sports season.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on HB343.