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CECIL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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Jeffrey A. Lawson, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Diana B. Hawley
President, Board of Education

BILL: HB343


TITLE: Education – Public School Athletics – Basketball Schedule

DATE: March 21, 2023

POSITION: Oppose

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

CONTACT: Jeffrey A. Lawson, Superintendent, Cecil County Public Schools



On behalf of Cecil County Public Schools, I oppose House Bill 343.

House Bill 343 would establish 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 yearly. Additionally, the bill requires the Cecil County Board of Education to decide whether to authorize a team to play in a tournament or a showcase game. Likewise, the bill prohibits a student from being disciplined for not participating in a game or practice outside the school year.

As superintendent, I have concerns about this bill's fiscal feasibility and future ramifications. Student participation outside of the outlined basketball season increases system operating expenses, school-sponsored programs' liability, eligibility compliance, and transportation requirements. Additionally, many systems do not have a pay scale accommodating coaches' compensation outside the regular basketball season. Typically, coaches are provided with a stipend to cover a defined contractual season. Since it is difficult to quantify many of the fiscal costs associated with coaching, providing additional compensation for singular tournaments poses a challenge to our school system.

Additionally, I am very concerned by the policy ramifications of the proposed legislation based on a single sport focus. This bill would require all other sports offerings, several within the same sport season, to follow the rules and regulations (agreed upon by association members) that would not be applicable to basketball players. Ultimately, legislation of this nature is precedent-setting and could lead to additional legislation for the other twenty-two administered high school sports and politicizing which sports take priority over other sports.

I am committed to equitably supporting our student-athletes who choose to partake in school sporting events. Therefore, I am very concerned that this legislation prioritizes basketball over other sports. Current scheduling limitations already allow for a maximum of twenty-one basketball games, exceeding the maximum for all other sports. This bill continues to set a different standard statewide and makes exceptions for a subset participating students versus all other students participating in sports annually.

I oppose House Bill 343 and request an unfavorable report for the reasons contained therein.