

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Expanding Opportunity and Unleashing Potential

OFFICE OF SCHOOL SUPPORT AND WELL-BEING

March 21, 2023

Bill: HB 343

Title: Education – Public School Athletics – Basketball Schedule

Position: OPPOSE

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Good afternoon,

My name is Jeffrey Sullivan and I am the director of systemwide athletics for Montgomery County Public Schools and the President-Elect of the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA). I am writing today in direct opposition of House Bill 343.

This bill creates a larger impact than modifying programming in the sport of basketball. Ultimately, legislation of this nature is precedent setting and could lead to additional legislation for the other 22 state-administered high school sports and politicizing which sports take priority over other sports. Legislating high school sports to this nature takes away the administrative control of the 24 local educational agencies administrators for interscholastic athletics who best know how to educate, coach, and mentor through education-based athletic programs.

HB0343 is harmful to Maryland schools for several reasons:

HB0343 challenges the exploitation of student athletes. Events without National Federation of State High School Associations and MPSSAA sanctioning may be run by third-party for-profit organizations and promoters that have no educational oversight. Events not sanctioned by the NFHS and MPSSAA may place public school students in events run by non-educational agencies and without safeguards to ensure student safety and protection of exploitation.

House Bill 343 sets a precedent and different standard for 396 boys' and girls' basketball programs out of the annual 4,215 varsity high school sports teams. In addition, the 24 LEA's would be impacted by student athlete participation in other sports seasons, the increased liability of school sponsored athletic activities, oversight of tournaments, eligibility compliance, transportation, facilities, coaching compensation, and student safety.

HB0343 does not authorize state tournament games for basketball or a tournament consisting of six games, which is the maximum number of games a team could play in the existing state tournament. March Madness in Maryland as we know it would become a thing of the past.

ATHLETICS UNIT

HB0343 does not take into consideration Conference/League Championships and postponed games. We have recently added county championship games for basketball in Montgomery County, with the support of our student-athletes, coaches, athletic directors, and our communities and they have been well-received and celebrated. This bill does not account for these games, which would directly impact MCPS and other districts around the state.

HB0343 does not provide oversight regarding rules and regulations which are not outlined in the bill, as this house bill supersedes COMAR language. This ensures compliance with season and weekly limitations, out-of-season practice, and sets a fair and equitable standard for statewide participation.

The interscholastic athletic regulations in COMAR 13A.06.03 are intertwined to ensure safe environments and fair competition that upholds the values of school-based athletics while protecting students from exploitation. Interwoven are regulations on eligibility, sport seasons, limits of participation, penalties for violation of regulations, state tournament authorization, and sanctioning of contests. The amendment process is derived from the local educational leaders for interscholastic athletics and ratified by the State Board of Education. House Bill 343 has the ability to complicate all sections of COMAR by focusing on one sport offering.

Finally, new COMAR language passed by the MPSSAA and the Maryland Department of Education now allows for school teams to participate in sanctioned out-of-season events, along with increased engagement opportunities during the summer months. These changes were achieved through a collaborative process and are rooted in promoting equity and access across the state.

To maintain the equity and integrity of our state athletic association and allow us to continue advocating for our student athletes, we ask that you help keep Maryland's 24 LEA's and the MPSSAA strong by opposing House Bill 0343.

Thank you for your continued service and support of the Maryland public school system and for championing the value and importance of education-based athletics to the well-being of our student-athletes and the mission of our schools.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jeffrey K. Sullivan, CMAA
Director, Systemwide Athletics
Montgomery County Public Schools
President-Elect
Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association