

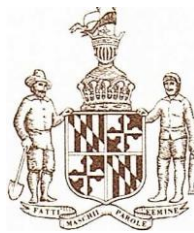
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Health and Government
Operations Committee

Subcommittees
Government Operations and
Health Facilities

Public Health and Minority
Health Disparities



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 22, 2023

SUPPORT

HB734 – Youth Sports Programs – Registrations, Personnel, and Policy

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Committee Members,

HB734 would make the best practices in staff screening and safety training, as used by some local Parks and Rec department and youth sports organizations, uniform for use in organized athletic programs for our youngest and most vulnerable athletes – from pee-pee through middle school ages

At the high school level of play and above, whether school or community based, organized sports programs and leagues often require that coaches and other personnel undergo criminal background checks and, at least, basic training in concussion awareness. These requirements are less consistently seen with organized sports below the high school level, in part, because the relative prevalence and importance of community and private leagues vs. school-based organized sports activity shift at the high school level of play. The Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) operating under a memorandum of understanding and in conjunction with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the local school systems to coordinate and regulate interscholastic sports. While they have no authority over community-based and private sports, their standards serve as a model that these other organizing entities frequently follow.

No such coordinating entity exist below the high school level, even though their risk of recreation- and sports-related injury, and of exploitation and abuse is greater. Certainly, our youngest athletes deserve an our concern for their safety and health and to have an expectation for protection from harm.

HB734 would require the coaches, team administrators, and volunteers for youth sports programs under the high school level

- undergo standard background checks as employed by the National Recreation and Parks Association;
- be trained in concussion awareness and child safety heat illness recognition, prevention, and treatment; and
- display a program I.D. when participating in organized activities.

And that each program

- maintain a registry of the background checks, and
- provide parents with information regarding health risks (and benefits) of sports participation, and associated policies and practices.

Most youth sports programs already maintain registries of their coaches, staff, and volunteers and their appropriate training, but they vary across the state in terms of what, if any, basic safety training or background information is required to serve in these roles of authority and supervision. Programs which do not already maintain a registry could choose to create their own or, as some are already doing, to partner with or join another's. The safety training is readily available through a variety of forums, including online, at minimal or no cost.

There are huge social, emotional, health, developmental and social benefits of youth recreation and sports activities, and such activity naturally comes with risk of injury. Where there are reasonable ways to minimize avoidable harm, we should do so. By applying current best practices as the statewide minimal standard, **HB734** helps better meet our shared responsibility for the health and safety of our youngest constituents. I respectfully request a favorable report.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "D. J. ...", written in a cursive style.