

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Brandon M. Scott
Mayor, City of Baltimore

Johnette A. Richardson
Chair, Baltimore City Board
of School Commissioners

Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises
Chief Executive Officer

**Testimony of the
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners
In Opposition of
HB 343
Education – Public School Athletics –
Basketball Schedule**

February 8, 2023

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners understands the concerns raised by the sponsor, but has several fiscal and operational concerns regarding the legislation. Participation outside of the outlined basketball season increases not only the district's operating expenses, but it also increases the liability of school sponsored programs, eligibility compliance, and transportation requirements. Unfortunately, it is not possible to quantify some of the fiscal impact in areas related to coaching, as current basketball stipends cover a defined, contractual season. If coaches request to be compensated for the time outside of the season, we do not currently have a pay scale to estimate the increased expenditures.

Previously, there was a desire to have athletes participate in NCAA June Scholastic events for more visibility. This issue moved to resolution when the Maryland State Board of Education approved at their July 26, 2022 meeting proposed amendments by the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) to COMAR 13A.06.03 interscholastic athletic regulation. The approved regulations went into effect on August 22, 2022. The change allowed for schools to participate in the National Federation of State High School (NFHS) and MPSSAA sanctioned events outside the defined sport season and provided opportunities for other sports to have those opportunities, as well.

The request to participate in tournaments outside of the defined season may result in participation in events not sanctioned by the NFHS and opens the door for third-party organizations that operate for profit. Also, allowing public schools students that participate against students that are not members of a state athletic association or a governing body that oversees equitable competition based on similar eligibility standards is concerning.

The school board is concerned by the program-wide ramifications of the proposed legislation based on a single sport focus. This bill would require all other sport offerings, several within the same sport season, to follow rule and regulations (agreed upon by association members) that would not be applicable to basketball players. This would make participation inequitable for other participants and would likely result in more single sport specialization legislation.

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As a district with a commitment to all participating student athletes, the Board remains concerned that this legislation places a priority on basketball specifically. Current scheduling limitations allow for a maximum number of contests for basketball (21) that exceeds all other current sports. This bill sets a different standard statewide and makes exceptions for roughly less than 500 participating students versus the over 4,000 students participating in sports annually.

City Schools' teams have participated in multiple tournaments and showcase events each year, while excelling in the current state playoff format. In addition, while some supporter may advocate this provides greater visibility for college recruitment, it is important to note that a large part of the college recruiting process also takes place during the AAU and summer travel seasons. While nationally, only a small percentage of students play at the college level, we have students earning those opportunities and excelling.

For the foregoing reasons, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners opposes House Bill 343 and urges an unfavorable report

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