

HB0204\_RichardKaplowitz\_FAV  
January 16, 2023

Richard Keith Kaplowitz  
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**TESTIMONY ON HB#0204 - FAVORABLE**  
**Education – Coaches – Mental Health Training**

**TO:** Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

**My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#0204, Education – Coaches – Mental Health**

I spent 31 years from 1989 – 2019 working as a high school soccer referee in Frederick and Washington counties. During my time on the field, I frequently found players that did not exhibit proper behavior within the rules for the game and had to discipline them as outlined in the rules. Bursts of anger at both their opponents and at themselves showed that players sometimes exhibit both anger issues and depression resulting from how they saw themselves playing versus the actual results on the field.

Coaches in sport have a leadership role in education in teaching not just how to play a game but how their athletes express themselves in educational, social and athletic environments. They can build up player's confidence and often become a sounding board for players to consult in personal issues at home or within the school environment. This bill attempts to mandate that we equip those coaches with a toolset to better fulfill their leadership and mentoring roles. Coaches will have a better understanding of how to interpret their players' moods and help them respond in ways that fit the situations in the most positive ways. We will teach coaches how to react to support the mental health challenges student athletes face to effect better outcomes and produce healthier individuals who can solve their issues in the best possible ways. The training will also produce better coaches by giving them an understanding of their own reactions vis-à-vis their players so that they can speak and act appropriately when confronted with situations calling for compassion and understanding. They will be much better in alleviating times when the correct responses can be critical in a successful intervention to prevent further mental or physical harm to occur.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB0204.**