



House Bill 686

Youth Sports Programs - Venue-Specific Emergency Action Plans - Requirements

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Health & Government Operations
Committee

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From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 686. This bill places excessively burdensome administrative, fiscal, and operational requirements on youth sports programming in addition to a potential significant unfunded mandate.

County governments fully agree with the intent of HB 686, which is to ensure that children and young adults enjoying youth sports programming are safe. To this point, county parks and recreation departments are already taking numerous measures meant to ensure that both participants and spectators alike can take advantage of this and similar offerings in environments that are as risk-averse as possible. While ultimately well intended, this bill would – in practice – curtail a county’s ability to continue to provide youth sport programming.

Specifically, counties have significant concerns with the following provisions:

- **Venue Specific Emergency Action Plans (VSEAP)** – Counties already largely develop emergency plans for staff and volunteers in youth programming. Mandating counties develop and rehearse in person specific plans for each facility is not only duplicative, but it also presents significant administrative, fiscal, and operational burdens. Furthermore, counties are already seeing a sharp decrease in volunteerism (both for youth programming and more generally). By raising barriers for volunteerism, the state will effectively be forcing counties to decrease the youth sports programming currently offered to our mutual constituents.
- **Automated External Defibrillator (AED) Mandate** – Several provisions referencing AED are unworkable and do not reflect on-the-ground realities. Page 3, lines 19-26 requires that VSEAPs mandate that AEDs are,

- *“(I)...present or within a brief walk of each athletic practice and event;”* – A “brief walk” is ill-defined and would be difficult to implement. This provision will cause confusion and open counties to increased litigation.
- *“(II)...freely accessible during each athletic practice and event;”* – “freely accessible” is ill-defined and would be difficult to implement. This provision will cause confusion and open counties to increased litigation. Additionally, AEDs can cost several thousand dollars and are targets for theft. This reality must be considered in any accessibility requirement.
- *“(III) all members of the coaching staff are trained on the operation and use of an AED; and (IV) a trained member of the coaching staff is present at each athletic practice or event.”* - AEDs are designed to be used in emergency situations by individuals with little to no training. This requirement establishes an unnecessary barrier to volunteerism.

It must also be noted that county facilities are not the only facilities being used for youth sports programming. In several jurisdictions, local leaders’ partner with community groups, nonprofits, churches, etc. Requiring either the owners of these facilities or the county to provide AEDs represents a significant unfunded mandate and ultimately will result in losing many suitable facilities.

Additionally, several counties have also highlighted that orders for AEDs continue to be backlogged due to supply chain constraints. With orders running roughly 8-9 months or longer behind schedule, this mandate may force a pause in certain programming for up to a year or more.

While well-intentioned, HB 686 does not reflect the on-the-ground realities of operating youth sports programming and will have the unintended consequence of curtailing many programs currently offered by counties. For this reason, MACo urges the Committee to give HB 686 an **UNFAVORABLE** report.