

My name is Madison Marino, and I am a visiting fellow in education policy at the Maryland Family Institute. I am asking for favorable consideration of House Bill 1373, the “Calvert County Public Schools - Extracurricular Activities for Homeschooled Students - Pilot Program and Workgroup.” This bill establishes a pilot program in Calvert County to allow homeschooled students to participate in extracurricular activities sponsored by public schools in the county.

Currently, homeschooled children in Maryland are barred from extracurricular activities with public school children.<sup>1</sup> Comparatively, as of 2021, 36 other states allow homeschool families to participate in public school extracurricular programs.<sup>2</sup> A neighboring state, Pennsylvania, has allowed homeschooled students to participate in extracurricular activities since 2006.<sup>3</sup> In recent decades, there has been a burgeoning nationwide momentum towards educational inclusivity, specifically in enhancing access to public school resources for all students living in the district.

In other states that have allowed nonpublic district students to participate in public school extracurricular activities, there has been positive feedback from those leading the activities. “A study of 147 public-school athletic directors in Florida [where homeschooler involvement in public school extracurriculars is permitted] found that these individuals ‘felt that homeschoolers interacted well and were socially adjusted, maintained their academics, and followed the schools’ standards of conduct.’”<sup>4</sup> Another study in 2012 “surveyed athletic associations in states that permit homeschool participation in public school athletics, they found that these organizations reported few if any problems.”<sup>5</sup>

Participating in extracurricular activities correlates with various benefits for children, such as improved academic performance, a more optimistic outlook on academics, and increased aspirations for academic success.<sup>6</sup> Studies indicate that engagement in such activities contributes to the cultivation of social skills, enhancement of self-esteem and resilience, and reduction of risky behaviors.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, increased

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<sup>1</sup> “Homeschool HUB: Maryland,” <https://education.jhu.edu/edpolicy/policy-research-initiatives/homeschool-hub/states/maryland/#:~:text=The%202020%20U.S.%20Census%20estimates,were%20homeschooled%20during%20this%20time> (accessed on February 27, 2024)

<sup>2</sup> “States with Homeschool UIL Access,” Texas Homeschool Coalition, <https://thsc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/States-with-Homeschool-UIL-Access-Tebow-List-for-UIL.pdf> (accessed on February 28, 2024)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Johnson, F. D. (2002). “An evaluation of Florida’s home-school students’ sports participation in the Florida High School Activities Association: An initial study.” Unpublished doctoral dissertation, United States Sports Academy, Daphne, AL (accessed on February 29, 2024); “2016 Homeschool Athletics Survey,” Coalition for Responsible Home Education, <https://responsiblehomeschooling.org/research/2016-homeschool-athletics-survey/> (accessed on February 29, 2024)

<sup>5</sup> “VA Homeschoolers Survey of State Athletic Associations,” Organization of Virginia Homeschoolers, July 30, 2012, <https://web.archive.org/web/20140718095812/http://www.vahomeschoolers.org/pdf/VaHomeschoolers-2012-Survey-of-State-Athletic-Associations.pdf> (accessed on February 29, 2024); “2016 Homeschool Athletics Survey,” Coalition for Responsible Home Education, <https://responsiblehomeschooling.org/research/2016-homeschool-athletics-survey/> (accessed on February 29, 2024)

<sup>6</sup> Caldwell, L., Darling, N., & Smith, R. (2017), “Participation in School-Based Extracurricular Activities and Adolescent Adjustment,” *Journal of Leisure Research*, pgs. 51-76, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00222216.2005.11950040> (accessed on February 29, 2024); “Girls Take Lessons, Join Clubs More Often Than Boys But Boys Play More Sports,” U.S. Census Bureau, July 26, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2022/07/children-continue-to-be-involved-in-extracurricular-activities.html> (accessed on February 29, 2024)

<sup>7</sup> Eccles, J. & Fredricks, J. (2008), “Participation in Extracurricular Activities in the Middle School Years: Are there Developmental Benefits for African American and European American Youth?,” *Journal of Youth Adolescence*, pgs. 1029-1043, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10964-008-9309->

participation in these activities provides young people with opportunities to refine their social skills and explore their personal interests, as evidenced by research findings.<sup>8</sup>

Providing all students in Calvert County with access to public extracurricular activities would offer advantages to the state and the community, particularly in light of the county's predominantly rural landscape, covering 75% of its total area.<sup>9</sup> In rural regions like Calvert County, private extracurricular opportunities are often scarce or entirely absent.

When families decide to homeschool their children, their local public school is not responsible for spending money on them. However, families continue to pay taxes that support the local school system despite not utilizing the school's resources. It appears justifiable that homeschooling families should have access to resources supported by their tax contributions.

In the 2022-2023 school year, 39,569 students were taught through homeschooling in Maryland; specifically, in Calvert County, 1,043 students were homeschooled.<sup>10</sup> This pilot program in Calvert County would permit less than 1 percent of the total homeschool population in Maryland to participate, as only high school-age homeschoolers would have access. Because of its smaller scale, this pilot program in Calvert County provides the state with an ideal opportunity to implement and evaluate its efficacy before potentially expanding the program statewide, offering valuable insights into its impact and feasibility.

The implementation of this pilot program will enable all students in Calvert County equitable access to the extracurricular activities that best suit their unique abilities and interests and maximize the benefits associated with engaging with other students in their community.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> "Most rural counties in Maryland," The Southern Maryland Chronicle, May 4, 2022, [https://southernmarylandchronicle.com/2022/05/04/most-rural-counties-in-maryland/#google\\_vignette](https://southernmarylandchronicle.com/2022/05/04/most-rural-counties-in-maryland/#google_vignette) (accessed on March 5, 2024)

<sup>10</sup> "Total Number of Students Taught Through Homeschooling as Reported by Each Local Education Agency School Year 2008-2009 to 2022-2023," <https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DSFSS/SSSP/HomeInstruct/15YearReport2022-2023.pdf> (accessed on February 27, 2024)