

## **MLU Support Letter - SB408.pdf**

Uploaded by: Carlos Orbe, Jr.

Position: FAV

**February 10, 2025**

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman  
Chair, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Maryland General Assembly  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Support for Senate Bill 408 – State Department of Education – Soccer Opportunities Program – Establishment**

Dear Chair Feldman and Esteemed Committee Members,

At Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU), we believe that sports have the power to unite communities, build resilience, and open doors for youth who might otherwise be overlooked. Senate Bill 408, which establishes the Soccer Opportunities Program within the State Department of Education, is a step toward expanding access to this transformative experience for more students across Maryland.

For many Latino families, soccer is more than just a game—it is a vital connection to culture, community, and personal development. It fosters teamwork, discipline, and a sense of belonging. Yet, access to organized soccer programs remains limited for students in under-resourced communities. SB408 helps level the playing field by increasing opportunities for participation, ensuring that every child has a chance to benefit from the physical, social, and emotional advantages that come with sports.

We know that involvement in organized sports can be life-changing. It helps students develop leadership skills, stay engaged in school, and build healthy habits that last a lifetime. For immigrant and Latino youth, these programs provide a safe space to thrive, build friendships, and find mentors who can guide them both on and off the field. This is about more than athleticism—it's about giving all students the tools they need to succeed in life.

By supporting SB408, we invest in a future where every child can dream big and reach their full potential, regardless of their zip code or family income. Soccer has long been a source of inspiration and hope for many; this bill ensures that those doors of opportunity remain open to all Maryland students.

We respectfully urge the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to issue a favorable report on SB408. Together, we can create a more equitable and inclusive future through the power of sport.

Sincerely,  
Carlos Orbe, Jr.  
Communications and Public Affairs Specialist  
Maryland Latinos Unidos  
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# **Written Testimony- Senate Bill 408.pdf**

Uploaded by: Gregory Smith

Position: FAV

My name is Greg Smith and I serve as Executive Director for the Maryland State Youth Soccer Association (MSYSA). MSYSA is the highest administrative authority for the amateur youth sport of soccer in Maryland and DC as recognized by the National Governing Body for the sport of soccer in this country, the United States Soccer Federation (USSF).

MSYSA's mission is to grow the game of soccer and to use the game to positively impact the lives of all who participate.

MSYSA proudly partners with more than 230 soccer clubs and leagues collectively serving more than 85,000 children each year. Your constituents. However, there is much work to be done to provide soccer participation opportunities to many more children as around a million children ages 5-18 live within our jurisdiction.

Participation in soccer, or sports in general, has been found to have a significant, positive impact on children's overall social and emotional health in addition to physical health along with other benefits like making friends and learning teamwork.

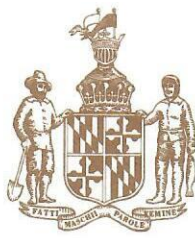
I am here asking for your support for SB0408 to provide grant funding each year to help provide more soccer participation opportunities (i.e., access) to more children here in Maryland by helping to reduce the known barrier of cost.

It is estimated that these grants will help upwards to 2,000 minority students, or more each year, have an opportunity to participate in the beautiful game of soccer. Thank you for all that you do for Marylanders, and I kindly ask for your favorable report.

# **SB408-King-Sponsor Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Senator Nancy King

Position: FAV



**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
**ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401**

**Senate Bill 408 – State Department of Education –  
Soccer Opportunities Program - Establishment**

February 12, 2025

Mister Chairman and Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

Research shows that participation in sports promotes improved physical health in children. But research has also shown that children who participate in team sports have improved cognitive skills and improved academic achievement, including grades and standardized test scores. Further, sports activity can improve attitudes and academic behavior, including enhanced concentration, attention, and improved classroom behavior. Through friendly competition, teamwork, and physical activity, kids have the opportunity to learn new skills, develop self-confidence, build character, and so much more.

Unfortunately, access to team sports is often inaccessible for some children especially those in low-income families. A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study found that 70 percent of children from families with incomes above about \$105,000 participated in sports in 2020. But participation was around 51 percent for families in a middle-income range, and just 31 percent for families at or below the poverty line.

Soccer is the number one team sport in the world and its popularity in the United States and Maryland continues to grow. But playing soccer costs money. There are costs for uniforms, equipment, entrance fees and travel making it difficult, if not impossible for some children to participate.

Senate Bill 408 will create a grant program to increase opportunities for minority and low-income students to participate in soccer programs. Similar to the Lacrosse Opportunities Program that was passed in 2017, this legislation will provide grants to soccer programs who at least 50% of their participants are minority or eligible for free lunch under the National School Lunch Program.

All of our state's children should be able to gain the benefits of playing a team sport. This legislation will help remove some of the financial barriers to participation and so I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 408.