

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 HB0358 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.