



February 18th, 2020

Brian Hess
Executive Director, Sports Fans Coalition
208 I St NE, Washington, DC 20002

Chairwoman Maggie McIntosh
Vice Chair Michael Jackson
Maryland House of Delegates House Appropriations Committee

Dear Chairwoman McIntosh, Vice Chair Jackson, and Members of the House Appropriations Committee:

I am writing to you today to offer my support of HB. 533, the Jordan McNair Safe and Fair Play Act, which provides for name, image, and likeness rights along with creating an advisory council to advocate for college athletes.

My name is Brian Hess, and I am the Executive Director of Sports Fans Coalition. Founded in 2009, SFC is a national grassroots non-profit advocacy organization devoted to representing fans wherever public policy impacts the games we love. We are best known for leading the campaign to end the Federal Communications Commission's sports blackout rule and have advocated before the Maryland legislature on ticket resale, sports betting consumer protections, and other issues. I wish that I could have been at the bill hearing in person to offer my enthusiastic support of HB 533. I hope my letter can adequately convey the importance that this legislation becomes law.

The Jordan McNair Safe and Fair Play Act is a great way to begin the conversation about the treatment of college athletes. The NCAA, sports apparel and merchandise companies, and media conglomerates earn billions of dollars in sports-related revenue each year, yet professes to operate in the name of so-called "amateurism." While college athletic programs often help students gain a college education, they too often extract economic gains from athletes while denying those young men and women a real chance to complete their degrees or otherwise share in the bounty created by the athletes' own blood, sweat, and tears.

Personally, when I was an undergraduate student at a public university, I tutored college athletes in the evenings. What I witnessed was disgraceful. The hours alone that my students had to dedicate to grueling workouts, frequent practices, extensive travel, and other team activities left them no time for academics. My students struggled to keep up with homework, study for exams,



and reach their potential in the classroom. Outside of tutoring, if I saw one of my students walking in the rain across campus, I was strictly forbidden from offering them a ride as that would be seen as “a gift based on their status.” In other words, I have seen first-hand the gap between what athletes provide to a state university and what that university offers in return. Mine is not an isolated experience.

These unreasonable restrictions on student-athletes are exactly why the commission this bill creates is important. Today, college-athletes have no organized representation, no lobbyists, no one. Absent an advocate, it falls on the shoulders of the fans to stand up for our athletes against the exploitation of the NCAA. Maryland’s college-athletes deserve more than the support of 40,000 sports fans. They deserve their Senators.

It is with that in mind that I urge the members of this committee to support HB 533 and take this historic step to protect Maryland college athletes.

Thank you,

Brian Hess

Brian Hess
Executive Director