

To: Maryland General Assembly
Judiciary Proceedings Committee
Re: SB0028 – 2nd Degree Assault of Sports Official Amendment
Date: January 15, 2021

Dear Maryland Senator Patterson,

I would like to write to you to show support for, and thank you for your assistance in sponsoring the pending legislation under Senate Bill 0028!

I was unfortunately involved in a similar circumstance over 30yrs ago, long before this was a “thing”. It is a scary feeling trying to get back to your vehicle with people yelling and throwing things at you, back in a day without the ability to even call for help using a mobile phone. I was lucky, no harm befell me other than being knocked to the ground before another team jumped in to protect me, starting a melee on the field....and having a league to then intercede and punish the player & manager (both adults) with suspensions and punish the team (and fans) with forfeits. I was still unhappy with the overall outcome but at least there were “some” repercussions. But to find out had there been a need to escalate this to a legal matter that the onus would have been wholly on me...without any aide/support of police to investigate....is scary and has me realize how lucky I was in this matter.

The unfortunate incident that was one of the triggers to this amendment is a truly scary situation for one to be in, but it at least has made everyone all too aware of how exposed a sports official here in MD is. Certainly happy to hear one my compatriots was not injured (this time), but so disappointed to hear that law enforcement had their hands tied in the situation not being a physical witness to the altercation. To compound this was the lack of support offered by the league involved, not backing up the official or providing any support to law enforcement by choosing to “protect their own”! No need to cooperate with any type of police investigation because the police were not allowed to investigate the matter. We all saw that recent video where the Texas football referee was physically assaulted on the field just a few months back. Under current MD law that video would not have been sufficient to warrant a police investigation unless the attack had escalated to a point where that official was lying in a hospital (or worse).

I do this, not for the money but for the exercise, and to give back a little to the various community and various recreation programs I am assigned to cover. I had “professionals” officiate my sports programs as a child, I wish to be able to do the same for today’s youth and adult sports enthusiast. The money is just enough to make this a “job”, to take it seriously, to show up hot/cold/rain/snow/shine...early in the morning, late at night....and be professional while going about it. It doesn’t compensate for the names we are called, the nasty critiques we hear, the verbal altercations...that all is simply a part of being a sports official. Every time we do or don’t blow a whistle, every time we call a ball or strike; one side or the other is not going to be happy with a call or lack of a call. But the uniform worn should not be thought of as a bullseye to the few people that believe we are “paid” to be punching bags when they feel wronged by a call on the athletic field....and being shown (in this instance) there are no repercussions simply because there is not a police officer stationed on every street corner.

Our organization has now experienced this first hand and got lucky to avoid any serious injury...that could have just as easily been me (again) out there. I understand the logic of this being deemed a misdemeanor...no physical harm, no property damage, no need to ruin someone’s life over....but we unfortunately have reached a point where there needs to be penalties and a way to enforce such penalties before what is deemed an acceptable misdemeanor does escalate to a much uglier crime. A sports official needs to know when it does come to a push and shove that somebody does have our back and can do something about it besides simply asking if everyone is okay.

Please vote in support of this amendment.

Thank You!

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