

Testimony in Favor of HB 1185

To Whom it May Concern,

My Name is Reggie White and I am the head football coach at Milford Mill Academy in Baltimore County. I am an alumni of Milford Mill and North Carolina A &T, where I was a scholarship football player. I played in the NFL for the San Diego Chargers and New England Patriots. My son Nick is a scholarship football player at Gannon University, and my oldest son Reggie White, Jr, played at Monmouth and for the New York Giants; he currently is playing for the Montreal Allouettes of the CFL. I do not mention these facts to burnish my resume or to impress anyone; I only reference these things because they illustrate the importance of football in my life and the lives of my sons. My life, and theirs by extension, has been improved by the opportunities to which football has allowed us access.

As a high school educator and football coach, I have seen firsthand the devastating effect that the pandemic has had in the social and academic development of our students. They have experienced learning loss, seen a decrease in their overall physical health and wellness, and had to deal with the numerous technology issues that were overwhelming, as well as the overall stress that went along with all of these things. It has been a more profound problem in the case of senior student athletes, because several of them have seen their chances of attaining the education that a scholarship could provide evaporate. They have no senior film for college coaches to evaluate, and in some cases, their academic record has suffered due to the virtual learning environment we have had to endure for almost a year. As a coach and mentor, what am I to do? How can I help these students? The truth is that right now, there is currently no mechanism anyone can use to pull these children up. But HB 1185 does provide that mechanism, and that is why I am in favor of this bill.

The opportunity to reclassify and return to the high school setting again in the fall gives these student athletes the opportunity to improve their academic performance, reclaim any chance that they might have had to participate in college athletics, and regain some sense of the normalcy that the pandemic robbed them of over the last year. They will be healthier physically and socially, and will have the confidence and maturity to better succeed at the college experience. Without HB 1185, this is not a reality. It is my belief that the passage of this bill would be a benefit to my student athletes that I coach and mentor, and I am asking for the committee to give this bill a favorable report so that it can be debated and improved upon in the larger body.

In closing, I would like the committee to put themselves in the place of these student athletes; think about your senior year. Think about how your life could have been different had you been one of these students. I know that is what I think about all the time when I see one of these kids struggling, and I am thankful that I had the chance to use athletics to give my family and myself a better life. I believe that this bill is a way that the state of Maryland can help us to help these students.

Sincerely,

Reggie White

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Position: In Favor

