

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF
SHANTRES SHAW
(MOTHER OF ELIJAH GORHAM)**

**IN SUPPORT OF LEGISLATIVE BILL SB 638
ELIJAH GORHAM ACT**

TESTIMONY DATE: MARCH 8, 2022

Hello, my name is Shantres Shaw. I am the mother of Elijah Gorham. I am here to provide oral testimony in support of **Senate Bill 638, known as The Elijah Gorham Act.**

My son Elijah was a vibrant high school athlete who practiced and played football from a young age. He loved sports and was loved dearly by his family, peers, teachers and teammates. Elijah was the type of person who could uplift someone's spirits who seemed like they were having a bad day.

It was on the afternoon of September 18, 2021 that Elijah suffered an injury while playing in a high school football game in Baltimore. After being removed from the game, Elijah was allowed to go back in. After being tackled, he went down and laid on the ground for 60 minutes – **one whole hour** – before help came.

I am testifying today because I don't ever want to feel this pain that I have felt since Elijah died in October 2021. I don't want any parent to feel the pain that I feel because their child is no longer with them.

I am the guardian of 2 grandchildren ages 2 and 3. I'm also the aunt of a nephew who is a football player at City College, runs track and jumps the high pole. I need this bill to pass to protect my other family members as they may become more interested and active in sports. I need to have some peace of mind that there will be laws passed to help keep them safe and hold sports leadership accountable.

It feels like the incident with Elijah just happened yesterday. Had SB 638 been passed last term, it's possible that my son Elijah would still be here.

It gives me some relief knowing that Bill 638 will focus on Emergency Action Plans (EAPs), Heat Acclimatization and proper training and certification of CPR, Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) and recognition of brain injuries/concussions among all Coaches, Athletic Directors and Trainers.

It was totally unacceptable for my son Elijah to lie on the ground 60 minutes before he received help. As I review information on high school athletes specifically, they are currently the most at risk due to lack of player safety protocols. I beg you to pass Senate Bill 638 **BEFORE** the new practice season begins this Spring. Practice season is when most incidents occur.

I am testifying today on behalf of my family, parents and student athletes at all levels of play, but especially High School because that's where Elijah played. His death should not be in vain, but represent a VICTORY within the State of Maryland. Passing The Elijah Gorham Act would represent a VICTORY and help save current and future STUDENT ATHLETES!

Thank you.

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