

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF  
DOUGLAS J. PHILLIPS**

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

**TESTIMONY DATE: MARCH 8, 2022**

Hello, my name is Douglas J. Phillips. I am a former head varsity coach at a Baltimore City high school, a board member of a large youth lacrosse organization, and the attorney for Ms. Shantres Shaw, the mother of Elijah Gorham. I have spent many hours over the past months reviewing Elijah's specific case and gathering information on the needs and challenges facing athletes and coaches in Maryland. Our question is, "How can future unnecessary deaths be prevented?" Today, I am here to provide oral testimony in support of **Senate Bill 638, known as The Elijah Gorham Act**.

Ms. Shaw poured her efforts into her son Elijah. He became a devoted son and brother, a motivated student, and a key contributor to the State Champion Mergenthaler Mustangs football program. On the day he suffered a traumatic brain injury, Elijah had scored a touchdown on a kick return and racked up yardage as a wide receiver. Elijah was a consummate competitor on the field and a shining light off the field.

Elijah's death was not some isolated exception to an otherwise highly-functioning system. The standard of care afforded to many student athletes in Maryland high schools could be much better. As part of the legal process in this case, I spoke with experts in brain injuries and it became clear—delays due to disorganization are a death sentence to athletes in Elijah's position. Elijah's brain injury happened on the field at Baltimore Polytechnic Institute—arguably one of Maryland's crown jewel public high schools—a short drive from University of Maryland's Shock Trauma unit. If it could happen in that location it could happen anywhere—in an off season

practice session at a small high school on the Eastern Shore or a mid-season game at a suburban high school.

The Elijah Gorham Act is a down payment on making sure preventable deaths like Elijah's never happen again in Maryland.

Thank you for listening to my testimony and the experiences of the courageous Shaw-Gorham family.

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