

HB 1292 - SUPPORT

Members of the HGO Committee,

Thank you for your time and consideration. As a parent, I was appalled to see several county public school systems require Covid-19 vaccines for athletes and extracurricular students. In addition, any separate quarantine policy based on vaccination status is completely unscientific. I am supporting HB 1292 for the following reasons:

1, Students should NEVER be discriminated against and excluded in this way. It is a travesty for a progressive state like Maryland to have this happening in our schools! There are many reasons why a family may choose not to have their child vaccinated- medical history, religious reasons, caution around new medical interventions, waiting to see more data, natural immunity... regardless, it is a decision that should be made privately with their chosen medical advisors. In any situation, it is absolutely out of line for a public school to threaten a student's participation in athletics or activities, or to treat students as if they are lesser, because of this decision.

2, Given what we know about the limitations of Covid-19 vaccines, these policies are not only unethical and inappropriate, they are NOT EVIDENCE BASED. Excluding and treating only certain children differently is wrong, unscientific, and arbitrary. That these requirements were created and allowed to stand, particularly with the lack of supporting data, is an egregious systemic failure. While some counties have updated their policies, the fact that there is now a precedent for this atrocious strategy, that could be reinstated at any time, must be remedied.

3, Limiting access to athletics and activities is not only detrimental to the health and wellbeing of our students NOW, but it also can have lasting effects on their futures. Think about the child who needs that physical activity out on the field; the student, hoping for a scholarship, who is now sitting out the season or the school play; or the senior applying to college with no extracurriculars. As with many misguided institutional policies, we can expect these inequities to impact socioeconomically disadvantaged and minority students disproportionately. With all that children have been asked to sacrifice over the past two years, denying them the simple outlet of school sports and clubs has got to be one of the most shameful.

Please act immediately to move HB 1292 forward. Unfortunately, there are far too many Maryland public school students who desperately need this legislative relief.

Respectfully,

Jenna Butler  
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