

HB 1122: Homeschool Advisory Council Ways & Means Committee Hearing: Wednesday, March 9, 2022

UNFAVORABLE Testimony FOR HB 1122 provided by: Miriam Snare
Homeschooling Parent

Honorable Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and members of the Ways and Means Committee:

I have been homeschooling in Maryland for the last 7 years and am planning to continue doing so until my younger child graduates in 10 years. While I would appreciate access to public school activities for my children, I am asking for an UNFAVORABLE report on HB 1122.

I cannot support this bill because it does not define what conditions could be included in “the public school’s requirement for participation in the extracurricular activity”. Currently, Baltimore County Public Schools require their students to have passed all of their classes in the previous semester and maintained a 2.0 grade point average in order to participate in athletics. Under the current homeschool regulations found in COMAR 13A.10.01, parents and guardians providing home instruction are not required to give grades nor are they required to calculate a GPA.

What documentation will be required from homeschooled students to prove that they have received the necessary grades to participate in sports and other extracurricular activities? Will a parent-constructed report card or transcript be accepted to demonstrate passing and GPA? Or will homeschoolers be subjected to school mid-term exams or final exams to demonstrate that their grades are valid? Since homeschoolers are not required to learn the same content or take the same courses as public school students, being subjected to those assessments makes little sense.

Will successfully passing the homeschool review with the county or an umbrella be sufficient to meet the academic requirement? The homeschool reviews only function to demonstrate that the parent is providing instruction; they are not assessments of the child’s grades. The timing of reviews also does not line up with public school semesters. My reviews in Baltimore County are usually dated mid-November and early April. Some counties and umbrellas only do one review per year in the spring. Would that make those children ineligible to participate in spring sports because they do not have a fall semester review to provide?

Another concern I have is that extracurricular activities often get showcased during the regular school day (for example, at pep rallies, awards ceremonies, performances in assemblies, etc.) While a homeschooled participant in extracurricular activities may be available for practices and meetings after regular school hours, they may be involved in community college class, homeschool classes through co-ops, volunteering, or part-time work during the school day. That would make them unavailable to play in the orchestra for a mid-day concert or cheer at a mid-day pep rally. Will full availability for these in-school activities be required of students that don’t attend the school?

The text of this bill demonstrates a lack of understanding of both the homeschool regulations and the extent to which extracurricular activities are part of the regular school day. Due to the lack of specifics on what the public school's requirements of homeschoolers for participation in extracurricular activities will be, I ask for an UNFAVORABLE report on HB 1122.

Sincerely,
Miriam Snare
Nottingham, MD