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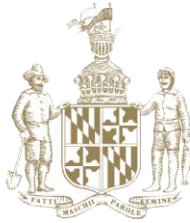
Land Use and Ethics Subcommittee

Joint Committee on Administrative,
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Joint Committee on Ending
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB0836

Public Schools – Student Athletics – Requirements and Reports (Elijah Gorham Act)

Ways & Means Committee * March 3, 2022

What this bill does

This bill will help us ensure that our school athletic organizations are in the best position possible to respond to sport-related injuries, including life-threatening injuries. This bill is dedicated to Elijah Gorham, a 17-year-old Baltimore City Schools student athlete who tragically died after suffering a brain injury during a football game on September 18, 2021.

As amended, the bill requires each county board to ensure that:

- schools have Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) and Cold Water Immersion (CWI) modalities on site for all school-sponsored athletic practices and events
- coaching staff are trained (twice per year) on how to operate an AED and how to execute CWI for heat acclimatization
- coaching staff trained on AED and CWI are present at all school-sponsored athletic practices and events
- student athletes are educated on the signs of heat stroke, concussion, brain injuries, and associated protocols so that they can also look out for one another and themselves
- schools develop venue-specific **emergency action plans for when things go wrong during a game or practice**, post them online, share them with parents and guardians, and have coaching staff rehearse them

The bill also requires each county board to report their emergency action plans to MSDE, including:

- the number and location of the AED and CWI equipment
- a list of individuals who have been trained to use the AEDs (including dates of trainings)
- a list of individuals trained in CWI and heat acclimatization safety standards and procedures (including dates of trainings)

Why this bill matters

Too many children suffer preventable injury or death in high school sports in Maryland. Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) are used on people experiencing cardiac arrest and Cold Water Immersion (CWI) equipment is used on people experiencing heat stroke. Both conditions have taken the lives of children in Maryland during sports games and practices.

Strengthening state law to ensure that AED and CWI equipment is accessible and that coaching staff are trained on how to use it will mitigate athletes' risk of catastrophic injury or sudden death. Emergency action plans are also life-saving. They ensure that school staff are prepared to handle emergency situations such as sudden cardiac arrest, head/spine trauma, heat stroke, severe orthopedic or vascular trauma and severe weather. These are common sense precautions that most parents probably think are already happening at their child's school. It is the responsibility of our schools to protect their students and ensure school staff involved in sports are prepared to handle emergency situations.

Why you should vote for this bill

The difference between a school having the proper equipment and a suitable emergency plan in place can determine whether or not a child's life is saved. The first minutes after a student suffers a medical emergency are crucial, which is why AED and CWI must be nearby and staff members need to be trained to correctly respond to the situation while first responders are on their way.

At least 15 states mandate AEDs at schools in some capacity and many require the development of emergency action plans. [Deaths of student athletes in other parts of the county reveal that the creation of an emergency action plan alone is not enough](#): the plans must be venue-specific and they must be distributed, posted, reviewed, and rehearsed. Coaches must be intimately familiar with the emergency action plan so that they can act swiftly in case of an emergency. That is what HB836 requires. There also must be oversight and accountability to ensure that these plans are robust – this is what HB836. Checking a box and self-reporting is inadequate.

When we have a strong law to protect student athletes and it is followed, it can save lives. [We have seen success stories from other states \(like North Carolina\) with laws such as the one before you](#). I urge a favorable vote on HB0836.