



The Senate of Maryland ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TESTIMONY OF SENATOR SHELLY HETTLEMAN SB 638 PUBLIC SCHOOLS - STUDENT ATHLETICS - REQUIREMENTS AND REPORTS THE ELIJAH GORHAM ACT

This bill is named in honor of Elijah Gorham, a 17-year-old Baltimore City student-athlete who tragically died on October 11, 2021 after suffering a brain injury during a football game a month earlier. This bill was passed unanimously out of the Senate EHEA Committee and the floor.

Jordan McNair (19 years old), Marquese Meadow (18 years old)¹, and Elijah Gorham (17 years old). These are the names of Maryland college and high school students who have lost their lives while playing their beloved sport. There are no words to describe the pain and anguish these families and communities have experienced. And, when examining the circumstances surrounding their deaths, it's hard not to believe that more could have been done to prevent them.

Student-athletes are quite vulnerable to experiencing sports-related injuries. According to research conducted by the National Athletic Trainers Association, "90 percent of student-athletes report some sort of sports-related injury."² Fifty-four percent of student-athletes have reported playing while injured and 12 percent reported that they have sustained concussions and head injuries. Between 2008-2018 there were 470 youth sports-related fatalities.³

[SB 638/HB836 Public Schools – Student Athletics – Requirements and Reports \(Elijah Gorham Act\)](#) is about ensuring that schools are in the best possible positions to respond to sport-related injuries.

This bill has several key components. As amended, it requires that each county board:

- require that high schools and middle schools develop venue-specific emergency action plans, share them with student athletes, families, and the school community and have coaching staff rehearse them

¹ <https://cnsmaryland.org/interactives/spring-2021/pushed-too-far/#lloyd>

² <https://www.atyourownrisk.org/studentathletes/>

³ <https://www.atyourownrisk.org/studentathletes/>

- have Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) and Cold Water Immersion (CWIs) instruments on site, and within a short distance for each school-sponsored athletic practice and event
- require that coaching staff are trained on AED and CWI and are present at each school-sponsored practice and event
- require that coaching staff are trained twice a year on how to use an AED and facilitate CWI
- ensure that an automated external defibrillator is provided on-site and is located at or within a **3 minute** walk from an athletic practice or event on school property

A technical amendment was added to include consistent references for compliance to both middle schools and high schools throughout the bill.

Too many students have suffered preventable injuries or death while participating under the supervision of trusted adults and officials. AEDs and CWIs can be the difference between life and death in many cases and venue-specific rehearsal of emergency action plans are critical.

The bill also requires that each county board of education report their emergency action plans to the Maryland State Department of Education and include: the number and location of AED and CWI equipment; a roster of the individuals who have been trained to use AED's and CWI heat acclimatization safety standards.

Creating and strengthening state policy will reduce the risk of injury or death. Emergency actions plans are life-saving and prepare schools and coaches to handle emergency situations and prevent catastrophic deaths. This legislation will equip students, staff, coaches, and others with the necessary tools to keep athletes safe on and off the field. I ask for your support of SB 638. Thank you.