

Testimony Opposed to HB 1235

To Whom it May Concern,

My Name is Marc Mesaros and I am the President of the Maryland Football Coaches Association. The MFCA represents member schools spanning the state, as well as a significant number of youth coaches. Our mission is to support football programs, football players, and the coaches who lead those programs in Maryland. We provide supplemental insurance, professional development opportunities for our coaches, and work to promote football in the state of Maryland. Another important function of the MFCA is advocacy; we are dedicated to supporting the people and communities that participate in this great game. We have testified before the Ways and Means Committee for the last few years either in support of or against bills regarding the sport of football and youth sports in general. As an organization, we are not in favor of HB 1235.

Maryland is a state in which local control is the law of the land in cases where local jurisdictions facilitate programs that serve children and families. Case in point: High school sports are regulated by the MPSSAA, whose rules and the ability to enforce those rules is COMAR. However, in the state of Maryland, we have twenty-four local jurisdictions who each have their own academic eligibility standard under the umbrella of the MPSSAA's governance. This example demonstrates the concept of how local control works in Maryland. Any attempt to supersede that ruling concept of local control would be something that our organization would not look favorably upon.

HB 1235 seeks to create a commission of professionals (of which only one is a coach at some level), to determine whether changes need to be made to the laws that govern youth sports at the state-wide level. The MFCA's membership is against this bill for several reasons:

- The law, while well-intentioned, is redundant. There is already governance at the local level that regulates how different jurisdictions monitor the safety measures in place and how those safety measures should be implemented.
- Most jurisdictions have county-wide representation in professional organizations such as MACPRA (The Maryland Association of County Park and Recreation Administrators) or MARPSA (The Mid-Atlantic Recreation and Sports Alliance). These organizations essentially function in the same capacity that this commission would be tasked to function and encourages localities to tailor their own procedures for monitoring the safety protocols in their districts to align with generally accepted best practices.
- The bill is vague; at no point does it clearly define how this board's recommendations might be used to craft future legislation. The bill does not describe the way this commission's meetings will be conducted; will our membership be asked to testify at hearings? Would coaches associations be involved in conversations that discuss governance of the sports in which these dedicated individuals work, mostly as volunteers? Also, where do the recommendations this commission hands down go; are these recommendations then the start of more far-reaching and overbearing legislation? These are all legitimate concerns that our members have voiced regarding HB1235.

While we believe that this bill is right-minded, it leaves many questions that go unanswered. Several of our members have voiced the concern that this commission is a vehicle that eventually would lead to a state-run board that runs youth sports from afar. Of course, there is always room for discussion; perhaps if these concerns were addressed, we could see how an entity such as this would be beneficial. For instance, if coaches and county parks and recreation officials were represented more equitably, and the mission and power of this board were more clearly defined, we could be able to support such an initiative. However, in its present state, the Maryland Football Coaches Association is not in favor of this legislation.

Sincerely,

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Position: In Opposition