



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of SB 21 –Public High School Stadiums– Fund

A high school stadium is more than a place where students fulfill their physical education requirements; it's a place for community gathering, the public face of the school on game days, and a place where students challenge themselves for next-level achievements. When athletic facilities fall into disrepair or can't fulfill one or more of their multiple functions, this can affect the school significantly and impact the safety of athletes, spectators, as well as anyone else who uses these community spaces.

Research on student participation in interscholastic athletics and activities shows the undeniable enhancement they bring to the academic mission of schools. Athletics serve as an inherent educational extension to the classroom, which keeps students more engaged in academics and fosters post-graduate success. For example, a 2019 nationwide study found that students participating in athletics have a GPA that is .15 points higher than those who do not participate. Research has also shown that interscholastic athletics and activities promote the health and well-being of students mentally, emotionally, and physically creating positive psychological and academic outcomes.

Here in the State of Maryland, we have a long, storied history of athletes graduating from our public schools and going on to achieve greatness at the college and professional level – but right now, the playing field is not level. There are dozens of high schools here in Maryland who have not had significant athletic stadium renovations in over a decade. This limits opportunities for our students and does not help us achieve the stated goal of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future – to provide a world class educational experience for every student.

To help address this longstanding problem, I am proposing SB 21, which will create a Public School Stadium Construction Fund with a \$60 million allocation beginning in FY2026. The Department of Legislative Services estimates that each stadium will cost around \$2-5 million to construct, so this fund will go a long way towards addressing the needs of schools that have been neglected the longest.

We must do more to support our great student athletes here in Maryland, who already commit so much time and energy to their academic and athletic goals. As legislators, it is our duty to help them achieve those goals.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable committee report on SB 21.