

# Alexander Allin - Support (FAV) for SB 165.pdf

Uploaded by: Alexander Allin

Position: FAV

## **January 17th, 2024 - Alexander Allin: Support (FAV) for SB 165**

Good afternoon, Mister Chair, Madam Vice Chair, and Committee Members. My name is Alexander Allin, and I'm a high school junior from District 16 in Montgomery County. Thank you for the opportunity to share my position on SB 165, Education – Coaches – Mental Health Training.

Coaches spend a lot of time per day with their team. They team-build and grow a tight-knit, trusting community of athletes. Because of this, coaches are one of the first people to notice when mental health challenges may occur in a student. For example, a coach may observe a player being distant or less interested in the sport and other activities. Coaches' close bond with their students makes them a trusted adult for many players struggling with mental health challenges. Without proper mental health training, coaches may overlook student-raised concerns and not notice signs of poor mental health in their players. Alongside the pressure of being an athlete, not having proper mental health support could cause students to quit sports they enjoy and have poor academics.

Because coaches team-build and create a community, making them the first point of contact or person to notice an athlete in need, a favorable report on SB 165 is imperative so students can achieve their full academic potential.

Thank you again for listening to student voices,

Alexander Allin, [alex@duck.science](mailto:alex@duck.science)

**SB0165\_MHAMD\_Fav.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ann Geddes

Position: FAV

**Senate Bill 165 Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training**  
Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee  
January 17, 2024  
**Position: SUPPORT**

Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as behavioral health). We appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of Senate Bill 165.

SB 165 requires Maryland public schools and public institutions of higher education to provide mental health training to all coaches participating in athletic programs. This makes good sense.

Pressure to perform can have a profound impact on an athlete's mental wellbeing. In a study of elite Canadian swimmers, it was found that 68% of the surveyed athletes met criteria for a major depressive episode. The depression prevalence doubled among the top 25% of athletes. Female athletes in particular are at risk for depression, according to a study by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I, the NCAA's most competitive division.<sup>1</sup> One study found "many student-athletes report higher levels of negative emotional states than non-student athlete adolescents."<sup>2</sup>

Injuries are also a frequent catalyst for anxiety, depression, and substance use among athletes. Many athletes may also show signs of posttraumatic stress disorder following a traumatic injury.<sup>3</sup> In a study of NCAA Division I football players, 33% of injured athletes reported high levels of depressive symptoms compared with 27% of non-injured athletes.<sup>4</sup>

Studies have shown that coaches can have a profound impact on both promoting the mental health of student athletes and engaging them in help-seeking when they show signs of mental health distress. Yet while coaches can play an important role in supporting athlete mental health, many are unsure what to do. Mental health education is needed to assist coaches in supporting the mental health of athletes.<sup>5</sup>

The data that demonstrates the prevalence of mental health needs among athletes and studies that show the important role that coaches can play in mental health promotion and intervention strongly support the need to increase the availability of mental health training for coaches. For this reason, MHAMD supports SB 165 and urges a favorable report.

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<sup>1</sup> Yang J, Peek-Asa C, Corlette JD, et al. [Prevalence of and risk factors associated with symptoms of depression in competitive collegiate student athletes.](#) *Clin J Sport Med.* 2007;17(6):481-487.

<sup>2</sup> Neal TL, Diamond AB, Goldman S, et al. [Interassociation recommendations for developing a plan to recognize and refer student-athletes with psychological concerns at the secondary school level: a consensus statement.](#) *J Athl Train.* 2015;50(3):231-249.

<sup>3</sup> Specialized care supports athletes' unique mental health needs. The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center. News release. February 7, 2022. Accessed March 14, 2022. <https://osuwmc.multimedia-newsroom.com/index.php/2022/02/07/specialized-care-supports-athletes-unique-mental-health-needs/>

<sup>4</sup> Brewer BW, Petrie TA. A comparison between injured and uninjured football players on selected psychological variables. *Acad Athl J.* 1995;10:11-18.

<sup>5</sup> Determining the role of sport coaches in promoting athlete mental health: a narrative review and Delphi approach. *BMJ Open Sprt Exerc Med* v.6(1). January 27, 2020. Accessed January 15, 2024. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7011013/>

*For more information, please contact Ann Geddes at 443-926-3396*

**2024 SB0165 MSPA Support Letter .pdf**

Uploaded by: Bradley Leposa

Position: FAV



**Bill: SB0165 Education – Coaches - Mental Health Training**  
**Position: Support**

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland School Psychologists' Association, a professional organization representing about 500 Maryland school psychologists. We advocate for the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic wellbeing of students and families across the state.

This bill requires that Maryland public schools and institutions of higher education offering a mainstream athletic provide specified mental health training to participating coaches. We understand the relationship that exists between children and their coaches, and we are supportive of any initiative to identify symptoms of mental illness and behavioral distress.

Therefore, for the above reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB0165. If we can provide any further information or be of any assistance, please contact us at [legislative@mSPAonline.org](mailto:legislative@mSPAonline.org) or Sarah Peters at [speters@hbstrategies.us](mailto:speters@hbstrategies.us) or 410-322-2320.

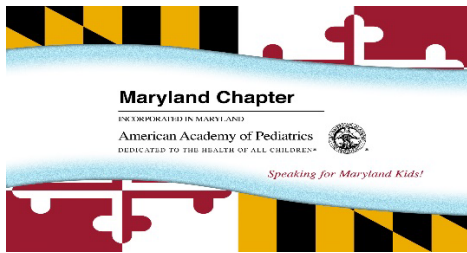
Respectfully submitted,

Bradley Leposa, PHD NCSP  
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee  
Maryland School Psychologists' Association.

# **SB0165\_FAV\_MDAAP\_Education - Coaches - MH Training**

Uploaded by: Christine Krone

Position: FAV



TO: The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chair  
Members, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
The Honorable Shelly Hettleman

FROM: Christine K. Krone  
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer  
J. Steven Wise  
Danna L. Kauffman

DATE: January 17, 2024

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 165 – *Education – Coaches – Mental Health Training*

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The Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MDAAP) is a statewide association representing more than 1,100 pediatricians and allied pediatric and adolescent healthcare practitioners in the State and is a strong and established advocate promoting the health and safety of all the children we serve. On behalf of MDAAP, we submit this letter of **support** for Senate Bill 165.

Senate Bill 165 requires Maryland public schools and public institutions of higher education, in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Health, to develop guidelines for public schools to train coaches in recognizing indicators of mental illness and behavioral distress in students. Pediatricians are well positioned to screen for mental health concerns in youth athletes at preparticipation sports physical exams, well-child visits, or while taking care of an injured athlete, however, *coaches* see youth athletes on a near daily basis. Coaches are uniquely positioned to be some of the first people to catch signs and symptoms of mental health and substance abuse challenges. The bill requires coaches to be trained specifically on: (1) depression; (2) trauma; (3) violence; (4) youth suicide; and (5) substance abuse. While statistically, youth participation in sports has significant positive benefits to physical and mental health, it can also create the perfect circumstances for burnout, overscheduling, unhealthy weight-control practices, substance abuse, intense pressure to perform, etc. Early detection of warning signs can lead to more positive outcomes for youth athletes. MDAAP urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 165.

**For more information call:**

Pamela Metz Kasemeyer  
J. Steven Wise  
Danna L. Kauffman  
Christine K. Krone  
410-244-7000



# **MM LOS for Education – Coaches - Mental Health Tra**

Uploaded by: Clare Kehoe

Position: FAV

To: Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Members of the House Appropriations Committee  
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

From: Morgan's Message, Inc.

RE: Education – Coaches - Mental Health Training

On behalf of Morgan's Message, we want to register our support for the *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* legislation, which would require training for coaches to recognize signs of mental illness and behavioral distress in student-athletes.

Morgan's Message is a non-profit organization that aims to amplify stories, resources and expertise to strengthen student-athlete mental health, build a community by and for athletes through peer-to-peer conversations, and provide a platform for advocacy.

Student-athletes can face immense pressure to succeed in their sport, which can negatively impact their mental health. According to multiple studies, college athletes have a higher risk for mental health issues than non-athletes. Additionally, the latest NCAA Student-Athlete Well-Being study reported that athletes felt only 53% of coaches take mental health concerns of their student-athletes seriously (NCAA, 2022). This likely results from coaches being ill-equipped to identify warning signs and connect struggling students with needed support.

Our organization was founded in 2020 in the wake of losing our beloved daughter, sister, friend, and teammate, Morgan Rodgers. Morgan was a vibrant D1 lacrosse player at Duke University who tragically died by suicide in July 2019 after navigating mental health challenges following a devastating knee injury. Despite putting on a happy face, Morgan suffered in silence, keeping family and friends in the dark as she battled her mental health.

In Morgan's memory, Morgan's Message strives to eliminate the stigma surrounding mental health and works to equalize the treatment of physical and mental health. We work directly with more than 4,400 high school and collegiate student-athletes, empowering them with education to share within their communities, and encouraging them as leaders and mental health advocates so that no one feels alone or loses their Morgan.

*Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* will require the Maryland State Department of Education to develop guidelines for public schools and the Maryland

Higher Education Commission to develop guidelines for public institutions of higher education to train coaches to recognize indicators of mental illness and behavioral distress in students who participate in athletic programs in public schools and public institutions of higher education.

Public schools and public institutions of higher education that offer athletic programs would be required to provide training to coaches based on those guidelines so that coaches can better detect when a student-athlete is exhibiting symptoms of conditions like anxiety, depression, disordered eating, and suicidal ideation. It would also teach coaches best practices for approaching students compassionately and referring them to appropriate resources.

Arming coaches with the tools to spot and intervene in situations where a student is showing signs of struggle will increase help-seeking behavior on campuses and save lives. A similar bill, Section 3313.5318 - Mental health training for coaches, was recently enacted in Ohio and we hope Maryland will take similar action to support its student-athletes.

During the last two decades, suicide rates for Americans ages 10 to 24 rose 62% (CDC). *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training*, is a common-sense measure to safeguard the wellbeing of young athletes across our state. The guidelines and training it implements will empower coaches to create a culture of health and safety for the students they mentor. On behalf of Morgan's Message, we urge a favorable report.

**MAC-SAPP Testimony.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Dan Zimet

Position: FAV

To: Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Members of the House Appropriations Committee  
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

From: Daniel Zimet, PhD, CMPC  
Licensed Psychologist  
Certified Mental Performance Consultant (Sport Psychologist)  
President, The Mid-Atlantic Consortium of Sport and Performance Psychology  
(MAC-SAPP)

RE: Education – Coaches - Mental Health Training

On behalf of myself and the Mid-Atlantic Consortium of Sport and Performance Psychology (MAC-SAPP), I want to register our support for the *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* legislation, which would require training for coaches to recognize signs of mental illness and behavioral distress in student-athletes.

Our mission at MAC-SAPP is to collaboratively stay apprised of; contribute to the development and dissemination of; and promote innovative approaches and evidence-based practices among professionals and consumers in sport, exercise, and performance psychology (see [www.MACSAPP.net](http://www.MACSAPP.net)). As some of the most experienced and well-trained professionals in the shared mental health and sports space, we are uniquely aware of coaches' role in supporting athlete wellness.

Student-athletes are at similar risk for common mental health diagnoses as their same-aged peers but face greater stigma when considering opening up about their struggles. Additionally, athletes experience heightened stress due to the competitive atmosphere and time commitment demanded by sport. Unfortunately, coaches are rarely trained to identify warning signs of mental health distress, nor are they informed on how to connect struggling students with needed support.

*Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* will require the Maryland State Department of Education and the Maryland Higher Education Commission to

develop guidelines for public schools and institutions of higher education to train coaches to recognize indicators of mental illness and behavioral distress in student athletes. Public schools and public institutions of higher education that offer athletic programs would be required to provide training to coaches based on those guidelines so that coaches can better detect when a student-athlete is exhibiting signs of mental health distress, including but not limited to conditions like anxiety, depression, disordered eating, and suicidal ideation. It would also teach coaches best practices for approaching students compassionately and referring them to appropriate resources. The coach would not be expected to provide mental health care; rather, they would be responsible for communicating their concern to the athlete and connecting the athlete to appropriate resources.

With teen suicide rates on the rise, we must do everything possible to identify and support at-risk students. *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* is a common-sense measure to safeguard the well-being of young athletes across our state. The guidelines and training it implements will empower coaches to create a health and safety culture for the students they mentor. As such, I endorse support of this legislation on behalf of myself and MAC-SAPP.

Sincerely,

Daniel M Zimet, PhD, CMPC

Licensed Psychologist  
Certified Mental Performance Consultant  
Listed USOPC Sport Psych Registry  
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a. Columbia, MD 21044  
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**HB204\_SB165 Borchers.pdf**

Uploaded by: Dr. Jim Borchers

Position: FAV



U.S. Council for Athletes' Health  
1241 Dublin Road, Suite 100 | Columbus, OH 43205

January 16, 2024

Dear Primary and Secondary Education Committee:

As Chief Medical Officer of the Big Ten Conference and the President and CEO of U.S. Council for Athletes' Health, I am writing to give my full support for HB204/SB165 in Maryland. This bill would require secondary coaches to receive training in mental health.

Mental health issues are at a critical level amongst today's society, especially athletes. Being able to participate in athletics is a significant opportunity and can enhance the educational experience. However, mental health must be the top priority for every sport organization.

Coaches spend a significant amount of time with their teams and are in a special position to influence their athletes for a lifetime. Therefore, we must equip our coaches with the tools and resources to respond to a mental health emergency. If a coach is trained properly, they will be able to spot mental health warning signs and direct the athlete to proper resources and support.

The passing of this bill will save lives and protect the health and safety of young people.

Thank you for your time,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'James Borchers'.

James Borchers, MD, MPH  
President and CEO  
U.S. Council for Athletes Health



# **Education-Coaches-Mental Health Training Testimony**

Uploaded by: Marcus Alston

Position: FAV



**In Support  
Senate Bill No. 165  
Education, Energy, and Environment Committee  
Senator Feldman, Committee Chair**

**January 17, 2024- 3:00 pm**

Senator Feldman, members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee. My name is **Marcus Alston, Founder & Executive Director of Alston for Athletes. As a former Division 1 student-athlete with lived experience, I'm in support of Senate Bill 165!**

Coaches serve as a first responder to a student-athlete, they go through CPR training but they do not go through mental health training. CPR training is used in a life or death situation for a student-athlete. But a mental health crisis can be a life or death situation for a student-athlete as well, so how come coaches are not properly equipped to help out a student-athlete in crisis. In my 15 years of playing football, I don't recall a coach having to use CPR once when I couldn't count on two hands the amount of times I've seen teammates in some sort of emotional distress.

As student-athletes, we often confide in our coaches about personal things we are dealing with. But only 18% of youth coaches are confident they can support their student-athletes' mental health. And 67% of youth coaches want more training in this area (Aspen Institute). If I had a coach who was mental health certified, I could've potentially found out about my mental illness at a much earlier age as opposed to finding out about it after I graduated college.

COVID-19 can lead to PTSD symptomology, which will have lasting effects on the future generation of young student-athletes. There were approximately 20 youth deaths related to COVID-19 the past three years, while there were approximately 166 youth suicides. Now think about all the health precautions that were put in place for the youth during COVID-19 vs. what is being done for youth suicide.

There are several organizations that oppose SB165 mostly due to the unfunded mandate but there are several free training resources available for example the Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention training from the National Federation of High Schools. The fiscal and policy note states that local revenues are minimally affected. In my opinion implementing SB165 is common sense. If coaches can find extra time to watch film and binge watch their favorite Netflix show, then they have time to complete a 2-3 hour training every few years. Isn't this something you would like to help your child? There is a much needed change for mental health in athletics and I believe SB165 is a step in the right direction! Attached in my testimony are letters of support from seven sport psychologists and eight advocacy groups including NAMI MD. For the reasons expressed, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB165. Thank you!

To: Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Members of the House Appropriations Committee  
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

From: Kate Farinholt, Executive Director, National Alliance on Mental Illness Maryland

RE: Education – Coaches - Mental Health Training

On behalf of the National Alliance on Mental Illness- Maryland, I want to register our support for the *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* legislation, which would require training for coaches to recognize signs of mental illness and behavioral distress in student athletes. National Alliance on Mental Illness Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a statewide network of more than 45,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations, and service providers. NAMI Maryland is a non-profit that is dedicated to providing education, support, and advocacy for persons with mental illnesses, their families and the wider community.

Student athletes can face immense pressure to succeed in their sport, which can negatively impact their mental health. According to multiple studies, college athletes have a higher risk for mental health issues than non-athletes. However, coaches are often not equipped to identify warning signs and connect struggling students with needed support. Undiagnosed, untreated, and inadequately treated mental illnesses significantly interfere with a student's ability to learn, grow, and develop. Because young people spend much of their productive time in school, and student athletes with their coaches, teachers and coaches should be equipped with the skills to identify indicators of mental illness and behavioral health in their students. Early intervention saves lives.

*Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* will require the Maryland State Department of Education to develop guidelines for public schools and the Maryland Higher Education Commission to develop guidelines for public institutions of higher education to train coaches to recognize indicators of mental illness and behavioral distress in students who participate in athletic programs in public schools and public institutions of higher education. Public schools and public institutions of higher education that offer athletic programs would be required to provide training to coaches based on those guidelines so that coaches can better detect when a student athlete is exhibiting symptoms of conditions like anxiety, depression, disordered eating, and suicidal ideation. It would also teach coaches best practices for approaching students compassionately and referring them to appropriate resources.

With teen suicide rates on the rise, it is crucial we do everything possible to identify students at risk and get them help. *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training*, is a common-sense measure to safeguard the wellbeing of young athletes across our state. The guidelines and training it implements will empower coaches to create a culture of health and safety for the students they mentor. On behalf of National Alliance on Mental Illness Maryland, we urge a favorable report.

To: Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Members of the House Appropriations Committee  
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

From: *Stephanie Rand, SKY Campus Happiness COO, a program of the International Association for Human Values*

RE: Education – Coaches - Mental Health Training

On behalf of SKY Campus Happiness, I want to register our support for the *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* legislation, which would require training for coaches to recognize signs of mental illness and behavioral distress in student-athletes. SKY Campus Happiness is a comprehensive well-being and resilience program designed to help students, faculty and staff achieve their fullest potential.

Student-athletes can face immense pressure to succeed in their sport, which can negatively impact their mental health. According to multiple studies, college athletes have a higher risk for mental health issues than non-athletes. However, coaches are often not equipped to identify warning signs and connect struggling students with needed support. SKY Campus is active on over 118 campuses where we work with students, faculty and staff to provide low barrier well being tools. The stories and struggles we hear from faculty and students show us the need for more mental health training for decision makers in education.

*Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* will require the Maryland State Department of Education to develop guidelines for public schools and the Maryland Higher Education Commission to develop guidelines for public institutions of higher education to train coaches to recognize indicators of mental illness and behavioral distress in students who participate in athletic programs in public schools and public institutions of higher education. Public schools and public institutions of higher education that offer athletic programs would be required to provide training to coaches based on those guidelines so that coaches can better detect when a student-athlete is exhibiting symptoms of conditions like anxiety, depression, disordered eating, and suicidal ideation. It would also teach coaches best practices for approaching students compassionately and referring them to appropriate resources.

With teen suicide rates on the rise, it is crucial we do everything possible to identify students at risk and get them help. *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* is a common-sense measure to safeguard the well-being of young athletes across our state.

With teen suicide rates on the rise, it is crucial we do everything possible to identify students at risk and get them help. *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training*, is a common-sense measure to safeguard the wellbeing of young athletes across our state. The guidelines and training it implements will empower coaches to create a culture of health and safety for the students they mentor. On behalf of The Hidden Opponent, we urge a favorable report.

To: Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Members of the House Appropriations Committee  
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

From: *Elan Gepner-Dales, Executive Director SKY Schools USA, International Association for Human Values*

RE: K12-Education – Coaches - Mental Health Training

On behalf of SKY Schools, I want to register our support for the *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* legislation, which would require training for coaches to recognize signs of mental illness and behavioral distress in student-athletes. SKY Schools and the International Association for Human Values foster the daily practice of human values – a sense of connectedness and respect for all people and the natural environment, an attitude of non-violence, and an ethic of social service. Our programs enhance clarity of mind, shift attitudes and behaviors, and develop leaders and communities that are resilient, responsible, and inspired.

Student-athletes can face immense pressure to succeed in their sport, which can negatively impact their mental health. According to multiple studies, college athletes have a higher risk for mental health issues than non-athletes. However, coaches are often not equipped to identify warning signs and connect struggling students with needed support.

In our work with hundreds of K-12 schools across the US, along with schools in Maryland, we are acutely aware of the challenges facing our student athletes. Our primary delivery of mental fitness programming takes place within PE classes, and we find the student athletes are often among the most resistant to the work, because of their bias and concepts around mental health, and their concepts and identities as “strong athletes.” The PE teachers are often their coaches, and their biases, concepts, and perceptions on mental health play a big part in creating safety or lack thereof for their student athletes. We consistently see the depth of the relationship between the student athletes and their coaches, where coaches often play a close to parental role in many students’ lives, and get a window into their personality and relationships which other educators don’t always access. In schools where we’ve run wellness program specifically with the sports teams, from boys football to girls volleyball, track, tennis and lacrosse, we’ve seen that both the powerful capacity of mental health and performance training to benefit student athletes, and how critical the coach is in setting the tone and holding the space. It is key that coaches be educator with the importance of mental



health training, and equipped with the tools to identify need and support their scholar athletes.

*Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* will require the Maryland State Department of Education to develop guidelines for public schools and the Maryland Higher Education Commission to develop guidelines for public institutions of higher education to train coaches to recognize indicators of mental illness and behavioral distress in students who participate in athletic programs in public schools and public institutions of higher education. Public schools and public institutions of higher education that offer athletic programs would be required to provide training to coaches based on those guidelines so that coaches can better detect when a student-athlete is exhibiting symptoms of conditions like anxiety, depression, disordered eating, and suicidal ideation. It would also teach coaches best practices for approaching students compassionately and referring them to appropriate resources.

With teen suicide rates on the rise, it is crucial we do everything possible to identify students at risk and get them help. *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* is a common-sense measure to safeguard the well-being of young athletes across our state. The guidelines and training it implements will empower coaches to create a culture of health and safety for the students they mentor. On behalf of SKY Schools and the International Association for Human Values, we urge a favorable report.

To: Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Members of the House Appropriations Committee  
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

From: Ryan Cain, Executive Director, Fund Recovery

RE: Education – Coaches - Mental Health Training

On behalf of Fund Recovery, I want to register our support for the *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* legislation, which would require training for coaches to recognize signs of mental illness and behavioral distress in student athletes. Fund Recovery is a nonprofit organization designed to help people with financial assistance for mental health or substance misuse services. Our Fund Recovery team has been able to assist with 1.9 million dollars granted, 800 (+) individual scholarships given, and has provided people with information about resources or providers nationally on all levels of care. We host several fundraisers each year to raise awareness, and reduce the stigma regarding mental health.

Student athletes can face immense pressure to succeed in their sport, which can negatively impact their mental health. According to multiple studies, college athletes have a higher risk for mental health issues than non-athletes. However, coaches are often not equipped to identify warning signs and connect struggling students with needed support. Since 2011, Fund Recovery exists to break the cycle of mental health issues by filling in the funding gap between someone who is struggling and their recovery. Our mission is to provide funding to directly support those combating mental health issues who cannot otherwise afford help, either by supporting the afflicted people directly or by assisting those who care for them. Fund Recovery provides financial assistance, individual scholarships, grants, and resources for addiction and mental health services for people seeking change.

*Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* will require the Maryland State Department of Education to develop guidelines for public schools and the Maryland Higher Education Commission to develop guidelines for public institutions of higher education to train coaches to recognize indicators of mental illness and behavioral distress in students who participate in athletic programs in public schools and public institutions of higher education. Public schools and public institutions of higher

education that offer athletic programs would be required to provide training to coaches based on those guidelines so that coaches can better detect when a student athlete is exhibiting symptoms of conditions like anxiety, depression, disordered eating, and suicidal ideation. It would also teach coaches best practices for approaching students compassionately and referring them to appropriate resources.

With teen suicide rates on the rise, it is crucial we do everything possible to identify students at risk and get them help. *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training*, is a common-sense measure to safeguard the wellbeing of young athletes across our state. The guidelines and training it implements will empower coaches to create a culture of health and safety for the students they mentor. On behalf of Fund Recovery, we urge a favorable report.



January 15, 2024

The Honorable Brian Feldman  
Education, Energy, & the Environment Committee  
2 West – Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support – Senate Bill 165: Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training

Dear Chairman Feldman and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strive through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS and WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS/WPS strongly support Senate Bill 165: Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training. Mental health first aid is a training program designed to help individuals identify, understand, and respond to someone who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. Coaches have an important role in the lives of their athletes, and they can play a crucial role in helping them manage mental health challenges. Therefore, coaches should be taught to recognize indicators of mental illness and behavioral distress in students.

Coaches are often the first point of contact for young athletes struggling with mental health issues. By providing coaches with the knowledge and skills needed to identify and respond to mental health challenges, they can better support their athletes and help them access the resources they need. Mental health training can help coaches recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health challenges, provide initial support, and refer athletes to appropriate resources, such as mental health professionals. Coaches can also learn how to create a supportive and inclusive environment for their athletes, which can promote positive mental health.

Overall, providing coaches with mental health training can help them become better equipped to support their athletes' mental health and well-being. Therefore, for all the reasons above, MPS and WPS ask the committee for a favorable report on SB 165. If you have any questions with regard to this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at [tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com](mailto:tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com).

Respectfully submitted,  
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society  
Legislative Action Committee

To: Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Members of the House Appropriations Committee  
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

From: Ashley Zapata, PsyD., Director, Sport + Personal Performance, SOL Performance + Consulting

RE: Education – Coaches - Mental Health Training

I am writing in support of the *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* bill. As a skilled and dedicated mental health, sports performance, and wellness professional specializing in sport and performance psychology, I am asking for your consideration and a vote in support of this legislation, which requires the development of a framework for all coaches to receive training on student mental health.

As a passionate advocate for the well-being of student-athletes, I firmly believe that this initiative has the potential to create a transformative impact on the lives of countless athletes.

Participating in sports not only fosters physical health but also plays a pivotal role in shaping one's mental and emotional well-being. Student-athletes face a unique set of challenges, balancing the demands of academics with the pressures of competition. It is essential that those responsible for guiding them through this journey possess the knowledge and skills to recognize and address mental health concerns.

Coaches, being influential figures in the lives of student-athletes, have a profound opportunity to contribute positively to their overall development. By providing mental health training for coaches, we empower them with the tools to identify signs of emotional distress, stress, or mental health issues in their charges. **This legislation is not just about enhancing the skills of coaches; it is about creating a support system that can make a critical difference in the lives of student-athletes who may be silently struggling.**

Training coaches in mental health awareness and intervention will enable them to establish open lines of communication with student-athletes, fostering an environment in which mental health concerns can be addressed without stigma. Coaches will be better equipped to recognize when a player may need additional support, and they can serve as a bridge, connecting these individuals with the appropriate resources.

Moreover, this legislation aligns with our collective commitment to breaking down the barriers surrounding mental health conversations. By integrating mental health training into coaching education programs, we send a powerful message to our youth that mental well-being is just as important as physical fitness. This proactive approach not only addresses the immediate needs of student-athletes but also contributes to destigmatizing mental health concerns on a broader scale.

In conclusion, I urge you to champion this legislation that places mental health training at the forefront of coaching education. By doing so, we can create a nurturing and supportive environment for our student-athletes, ensuring that they not only excel in their respective sports but also thrive mentally and emotionally. Together, let us invest in the well-being of athletes, fostering an athlete community that is not only physically strong but resilient in mind and spirit.

Maryland has an opportunity to take the lead in advocating for all student-athletes and recognizing the importance of their mental health. Knowledge is power, and empowering all of our coaches with training to recognize our students who may be struggling benefits everyone. Help us open dialogues. Let's be able to talk!

Please support the passage of *Education- Coaches – Mental Health Training*. Thank you for your consideration.

*Ashley M. Zapata*

Ashley M. Zapata, PsyD  
Director, Sport+Personal Development  
SOL Performance+Consulting  
[info@drazapata.com](mailto:info@drazapata.com)  
+16077310699

To: Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Members of the House Appropriations Committee  
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

From: Justin Jacques, Ph.D., LPC., Founder, Human Theory Group

RE: Education – Coaches - Mental Health Training

On behalf of the Human Theory Group, I want to register our support for the *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* legislation, which would require training for coaches to recognize signs of mental illness and behavioral distress in student-athletes. At the Human Theory Group, we strive to diagnose and treat mental illness through mental health counseling and sports performance consultation. A great majority of our clients are current and former student athletes.

Student-athletes can face immense pressure to succeed in their sport, which can negatively impact their mental health. According to multiple studies, college athletes have a higher risk for mental health issues than non-athletes. However, coaches are often not equipped to identify warning signs and connect struggling students with needed support. At Human Theory Group we have seen a large increase in student athletes seeking mental health counseling. This is due to help seeking behavior increases and stigma decreasing in our culture, but also as a result of the emotional tsunami that has occurred as a result of the pandemic. Student athletes are struggling more than ever with connecting with each other, loneliness, and feelings of hopelessness. It has become exceedingly important that coaches are trained in recognizing the signs and symptoms of mental health issues in their athletes so they can be referred to the proper resources in their communities.

*Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* will require the Maryland State Department of Education to develop guidelines for public schools and the Maryland Higher Education Commission to develop guidelines for public institutions of higher education to train coaches to recognize indicators of mental illness and behavioral distress in students who participate in athletic programs in public schools and public institutions of higher education. Public schools and public institutions of higher education that offer athletic programs would be required to provide training to coaches based on those guidelines so that coaches can better detect when a student-athlete is exhibiting symptoms of conditions like anxiety, depression, disordered eating, and suicidal ideation. It would also teach coaches best practices for approaching students compassionately and referring them to appropriate resources.

With teen suicide rates on the rise, it is crucial we do everything possible to identify students at risk and get them help. *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* is a common-sense measure to safeguard the well-being of young athletes across our state. The guidelines and training it implements will empower coaches to create a culture of health and safety for the students they mentor. On behalf of the Human Theory Group, we urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Justin Jacques Ph.D., LPC, ACS, CAC II CEAP, NCC

Pronouns: he/him/his

Founder / Mental Health Coach Human Theory Group LLC

Tel: 303-513-3391

[justinjacques@humantheorygroup.com](mailto:justinjacques@humantheorygroup.com)



To: Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Members of the House Appropriations Committee  
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

From: Justin Jacques, Ph.D., LPC., Founder, Human Theory Group | Chief Clinical Officer,  
Technotherapy

RE: Education – Coaches - Mental Health Training

I am writing in support of the *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* bill. As a licensed mental health counselor and mental performance coach, I am asking for your consideration and a vote in support of this legislation, which requires the development of a framework for all coaches to receive training on student mental health.

I'd like to share my personal story with you so that you understand why the passage of this legislation is so important to us as athletes. As a student athlete who grew up in Iowa and played six high school sports, there were no resources for coaches to understand mental health as it related to athletes like me. As an adult I battled depression and anxiety as a result of my ADHD and my Dyslexia. If my coaches had had a better understanding of what signs and symptoms to look for regarding my mental health, it would have been tremendously helpful for me to get treatment earlier in my life. Without the treatment my sports career was cut short in college and my depression and anxiety worsened after college to a severe state. It almost derailed my life permanently. I finally sought help and it changed my life. It is very important that high school coaches have the skills and abilities to recognize and help student athletes with their mental health concerns to avoid undue suffering and ultimately the countless suicides that occur each year in this country.

Maryland has an opportunity to take the lead in advocating for all student-athletes and recognizing the importance of their mental health. Knowledge is power, and empowering all of our coaches with training to recognize our students who may be struggling benefits everyone. Help us open dialogues. Let's be able to talk!

Please support the passage of *Education- Coaches – Mental Health Training*. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Justin Jacques Ph.D., LPC, ACS, CAC II CEAP, NCC  
Pronouns: he/him/his  
Founder / Mental Health Coach Human Theory Group LLC  
Tel: 303-513-3391  
justinjacques@humantheorygroup.com

To: Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Members of the House Appropriations Committee  
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

From: Marc Felizzi, Associate Professor, Millersville University

RE: Education – Coaches - Mental Health Training

I am writing in support of the *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* bill. As a Sport Social Worker, member of the United States Olympic/Paralympic Mental Health Provider Network, and the Alliance for Social Workers in Sports, as well as Coordinator of a dual degree MSW/MEd in Sport Management program, I am asking for your consideration and a vote in support of this legislation, which requires the development of a framework for all coaches to receive training on student mental health.

I'd like to share my thoughts regarding the need to address athletes and mental health. The need to address athlete mental health in our society has never been more evident. The role of sports in North American society is large, lucrative, and rife with pressure, emotionally and physically. Mental Health professionals, such as social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists and counselors can be found in many areas where counseling, therapy or social skills development and education are indicated. Social workers also assist student athletes at the high school and university levels in both the United States and Canada (NASWIS, 2017) in a number of areas, including the recruitment process to collegiate or professional athletics.

Maryland has an opportunity to take the lead in advocating for all student-athletes and recognizing the importance of their mental health. Knowledge is power, and empowering all of our coaches with training to recognize our students who may be struggling benefits everyone. Help us open dialogues. Let's be able to talk!

Please support the passage of *Education- Coaches – Mental Health Training*. Thank you for your consideration.

To: Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Members of the House Appropriations Committee  
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

From: Kym & Mark Hilinski, Founders, Hilinski's Hope

RE: Education – Coaches - Mental Health Training

On behalf of Hilinski's Hope, we want to register our support for the *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* legislation, which would require training for coaches to recognize signs of mental illness and behavioral distress in student-athletes. We lost our son, Tyler Hilinski, to suicide on January 16, 2018. Tyler was a quarterback at Washington State University and we didn't have any idea he was struggling. We believe the stigma attached to talking about mental health and illness runs so strong among student-athletes. It's that stigma that may have prevented Tyler from reaching out and asking for mental health support; perhaps in fear of appearing weak, losing playing time, and possibly no longer being viewed as a leader. Student-athletes can face immense pressure to succeed in their sport, which can negatively impact their mental health. According to multiple studies, college athletes have a higher risk for mental health issues than non-athletes. However, coaches are often not equipped to identify warning signs and connect struggling students with needed support. Tyler's coach at Washington State University was Coach Mike Leach, who sadly passed away in 2022. Coach Leach and Tyler were very close and Mike shared with us that out of all the players on his roster, he would have placed Tyler at the bottom of those he thought would pass by suicide. Coach Leach and Tyler's position coaches and staff didn't know how to recognize the signs of mental health struggles because they were never taught what to indicators to look for. We created Hilinski's Hope to support the mental health of student-athletes, in the hopes to prevent another "Tyler" from passing by suicide and/or suffering in silence.

*Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* will require the Maryland State Department of Education to develop guidelines for public schools and the Maryland Higher Education Commission to develop guidelines for public institutions of higher education to train coaches to recognize indicators of mental illness and behavioral distress in students who participate in athletic programs in public schools and public institutions of higher education. Public schools and public institutions of higher education that offer athletic programs would be required to provide training to coaches based on those guidelines so that coaches can better detect when a student-athlete is exhibiting symptoms of conditions like anxiety, depression, disordered eating, and

suicidal ideation. It would also teach coaches best practices for approaching students compassionately and referring them to appropriate resources.

With teen suicide rates on the rise, it is crucial we do everything possible to identify students at risk and get them help. *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* is a common-sense measure to safeguard the well-being of young athletes across our state. The guidelines and training it implements will empower coaches to create a culture of health and safety for the students they mentor. On behalf of Hilinkis's Hope, we urge a favorable report.

To: Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Members of the House Appropriations Committee  
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

From: Kristina Miller, VP & Director, Don't Make It Weird, Inc

RE: Education – Coaches - Mental Health Training

On behalf of Don't Make It Weird, Inc (501(c)3) I want to register our support for the *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* legislation, which would require training for coaches to recognize signs of mental illness and behavioral distress in student-athletes. At Don't Make It Weird, Inc, (DMIW.org) we are working to break the stigma surrounding mental illness by offering support, education, resources, and community service awareness events.

Student-athletes can face immense pressure to succeed in their sport, which can negatively impact their mental health. According to multiple studies, college athletes have a higher risk for mental health issues than non-athletes. However, coaches are often not equipped to identify warning signs and connect struggling students with needed support. Harry Miller, a football player at The Ohio State University, publicly retired from football in March 2022 due to his declining mental health. His retirement has touched the hearts of athletes and non-athletes alike as this crisis continues to decimate families across our country. Harry's job instantly shifted from Football Star to a much more important role: Mental Health Advocate. Fortunately, Harry was in a place that had the infrastructure to support him in crisis with multiple full-time sports psychologists on staff he immediately received the help he desperately needed. This is not the case in most situations. We have seen first hand the challenges Student-Athletes face that are unique to them, pressure, expectations, injuries, travel, academics, 15 hour days... each part adds to the overwhelming stress a student-athlete faces daily. Sadly, we know of players in crisis at other well known P-5 institutions whose struggles were not recognized, they were labeled as being lazy, and subsequently removed from their teams. It is vital that coaches are equipped with the training to recognize signs of mental illness and behavioral distress in student-athletes so help is received in a timely and effective manner. We must not stop, we can not stop until we have exhausted every possible opportunity to save a student-athletes life. Coaches should be the first line of defense when discussing the protection of the student-athletes they are in charge of daily. NOT ONE MORE!

*Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* will require the Maryland State Department of Education to develop guidelines for public schools and the Maryland Higher Education Commission to develop guidelines for public institutions of higher education to train coaches to recognize indicators of mental illness and behavioral distress in students who participate in athletic programs in public schools and public institutions of higher education. Public schools and public institutions of higher education that offer athletic programs would be required to provide training to coaches based on those guidelines so that coaches can better detect when a student-athlete is exhibiting symptoms of conditions like anxiety, depression, disordered eating, and suicidal ideation. It would also teach coaches best practices for approaching students compassionately and referring them to appropriate resources.

With teen suicide rates on the rise, it is crucial we do everything possible to identify students at risk and get them help. *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* is a common-sense measure to safeguard the well-being of young athletes across our state. The guidelines and training it implements will empower coaches to create a culture of health and safety for the students they mentor. On behalf of Don't Make It Weird, we urge a favorable report.

***Kristina S. Miller, CPS-P***

Kristina S. Miller, CPS-P  
Don't Make It Weird, Inc 501(c)3  
PO Box 368 | Buford, GA 30515  
770-262-2221  
Kris@DMIW.org  
DMIW.org

To: Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Members of the House Appropriations Committee  
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

From: Robert Owens, Ed.D, CMPC., Founder, Resolute Performance

RE: Education – Coaches - Mental Health Training

I am writing in support of the *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* bill. As a licensed clinical mental health therapist and an elite performance coach and leader within the field of applied sport psychology, I am asking for your consideration and a vote in support of this legislation, which requires the development of a framework for all coaches to receive training on student mental health.

Over the last few years, I have worked with many athletes who have experienced mental health distress given the performance demands of their respective sports. Oftentimes, the athlete's stress was compounded by and/or directly related to the coach-athlete relationship. Talent can only be cultivated in environments where the athlete's overall well-being is not only considered but centered. That is why the passage of this legislation is so important to athletes and to performance coaches and mental health professionals, like me, who support them.

Maryland has an opportunity to take the lead in advocating for all student-athletes and recognizing the importance of their mental health. Knowledge is power. Training will empower coaches to recognize student-athletes in distress and help them create cultures of performance excellence that will elevate athletes to reach their full potential.

Please support the passage of *Education- Coaches – Mental Health Training*. Thank you for your consideration.

To: Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Members of the House Appropriations Committee  
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

From: Robert Owens, Ed.D, CMPC., Founder, Resolute Performance, PLLC

RE: Education – Coaches - Mental Health Training

On behalf of Resolute Performance, PLLC, I want to register our support for the *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* legislation, which would require training for coaches to recognize signs of mental illness and behavioral distress in student-athletes. At Resolute, we help individuals and teams to leverage and reach goals related to high performance. We help organizational clients to create an ethos of peak performance and install that ethos into the organization's mission, vision, values, and standards of behavior.

Student-athletes can face immense pressure to succeed in their sport, which can negatively impact their mental health. According to multiple studies, college athletes have a higher risk for mental health issues than non-athletes. However, coaches are often not equipped to identify warning signs and connect struggling students with needed support. At Resolute Performance, we work with coaches to foster mastery performance climates for their athletes and help them strengthen relationships with their athletes through education, honest and open dialogue, and cultural humility. Being aware of an athlete's mental status and understanding the relationship between mental health and performance is one of our core values.

*Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* will require the Maryland State Department of Education to develop guidelines for public schools and the Maryland Higher Education Commission to develop guidelines for public institutions of higher education to train coaches to recognize indicators of mental illness and behavioral distress in students who participate in athletic programs in public schools and public institutions of higher education. Public schools and public institutions of higher education that offer athletic programs would be required to provide training to coaches based on those guidelines so that coaches can better detect when a student-athlete is exhibiting symptoms of conditions like anxiety, depression, disordered eating, and suicidal ideation. It would also teach coaches best practices for approaching students compassionately and referring them to appropriate resources.



With teen suicide rates on the rise, it is crucial we do everything possible to identify students at risk and get them help. *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* is a common-sense measure to safeguard the well-being of young athletes across our state. The guidelines and training it implements will empower coaches to create a culture of health and safety for the students they mentor. On behalf of Resolute Performance, we urge a favorable report.

To: Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Members of the House Appropriations Committee  
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

From: Brad Bryk, PsyD., Clinical Psychologist and Sport Psychologist

RE: Education – Coaches - Mental Health Training

I am writing in support of the *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* bill. As a licensed Clinical and Sport Psychologist, I am asking for your consideration and a vote in support of this legislation, which requires the development of a framework for all coaches to receive training on student mental health.

In my role as a Clinical and Sport Psychologist working in the private practice setting, I am uniquely aware of coaches' role in supporting athlete wellness. Student-athletes are at greater risk for several mental health diagnoses than their same-aged peers. While numerous reasons can be identified, perhaps the most obvious is the added stress athletes face due to the competitive atmosphere and time commitment demanded by sport. Unfortunately, coaches are rarely trained to identify warning signs of mental health distress, nor are they informed on how to connect struggling students with needed support.

*Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* bill will require the Maryland State Department of Education and the Maryland Higher Education Commission to develop guidelines for public schools and institutions of higher education to train coaches to recognize indicators of mental illness and behavioral distress in student athletes. Public schools and public institutions of higher education that offer athletic programs would be required to provide training to coaches based on those guidelines so that coaches can better detect when a student-athlete is exhibiting signs of mental health distress, including but not limited to conditions like anxiety, depression, disordered eating, and suicidal ideation. It would also teach coaches best practices for approaching students compassionately and referring them to appropriate resources. The coach would not be expected to provide mental health care; rather, they would be responsible for communicating their concern to the athlete and connecting the athlete to appropriate resources. With teen suicide rates on the rise, we must do everything possible to identify and support at-risk students. *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* is a common-sense measure to safeguard the well-being of young athletes across our state. The guidelines and training it implements will empower coaches to create a health and safety culture for the students they mentor.

Maryland has an opportunity to take the lead in advocating for all student-athletes and recognizing the importance of their mental health. Knowledge is power, and empowering all of our coaches with training to recognize our students who may be struggling benefits everyone. Help us open dialogues. Let's be able to talk!

Please support the passage of *Education- Coaches – Mental Health Training*. Thank you for your consideration.

To: Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Members of the House Appropriations Committee  
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

From: Marissa Norman, PsyD., Sport Psychologist, Top Form Psychology

RE: Education – Coaches - Mental Health Training

I am writing in support of the *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* bill. As a Certified Mental Performance Consultant (CMPC), Licensed Psychologist, and PSYPACT Clinician, working with student-athletes, coaches, administrators, and staff within NCAA institutions, high schools, and professional organizations. I am asking for your consideration and a vote in support of this legislation, which requires the development of a framework for all coaches to receive training on student mental health.

As someone who works in the field of sport psychology, I have seen firsthand how educating coaches on mental health can save lives. By learning about the signs and symptoms of mental illness and how to support the well-being of their student-athletes, coaches will be equipped with the necessary resources and confidence to identify concerns and help their athletes find the appropriate support. On the other hand, I have also witnessed the negative impact of coaches who lack understanding of mental health. Ignorance is not always bliss, and even something as simple as requiring mental health training for coaches can make a huge difference. This sends a message to student-athletes that they are valued and supported, which is incredibly important for their overall well-being.

Maryland has an opportunity to take the lead in advocating for all student-athletes and recognizing the importance of their mental health. Knowledge is power, and empowering all of our coaches with training to recognize our students who may be struggling benefits everyone. Help us open dialogues. Let's be able to talk!

Please support the passage of *Education- Coaches – Mental Health Training*. Thank you for your consideration.

Best,

Dr. Marissa Norman

**Marques\_Ogden\_SB165\_Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Marques Ogden

Position: FAV



**In Support  
Senate Bill No. 165  
Education, Energy, and Environment Committee  
Senator Feldman, Committee Chair**

**January 17, 2024- 3:00 pm**

Senator Feldman, members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee. As a former NFL athlete, Senate Bill 165 is extremely important to me. I played for The Baltimore Ravens and I loved my time living in the great city of Baltimore. But, part of my time in Baltimore was dark, suicidal, depressing and I felt like I was all alone. I never was given any tools or knowledge on how to handle my mental health issues as a high school or college athlete, so when I became a professional athlete I struggled immensely with some really hard issues.

I believe Senate Bill 165 will better equip coaches when addressing their athletes' mental health. With early interventions like mental health first aid, more mental health awareness and support will be brought to athletics throughout Maryland so that young athletes don't end up almost taking their life, as I once did!

Sincerely,



Marques Ogden

# **The Jordan McNair Organization Testimony.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Marty McNair

Position: FAV

To: Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Members of the House Appropriations Committee  
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

From: Marty McNair, President, The Jordan McNair Foundation

RE: Education – Coaches - Mental Health Training

On behalf of The Jordan McNair Foundation, I want to register our support for the *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* legislation, which would require training for coaches to recognize signs of mental illness and behavioral distress in student athletes. The mission of “The Jordan McNair Foundation” as a non-profit organization is to promote awareness, educate, and advocate for parents and student athletes about heat related illness at the youth, high school, and collegiate levels. We seek to diminish the occurrence of heat-related illnesses and improve player safety.

Student athletes can face immense pressure to succeed in their sport, which can negatively impact their mental health. According to multiple studies, college athletes have a higher risk for mental health issues than non-athletes. However, coaches are often not equipped to identify warning signs and connect struggling students with needed support.

*Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* will require the Maryland State Department of Education to develop guidelines for public schools and the Maryland Higher Education Commission to develop guidelines for public institutions of higher education to train coaches to recognize indicators of mental illness and behavioral distress in students who participate in athletic programs in public schools and public institutions of higher education. Public schools and public institutions of higher education that offer athletic programs would be required to provide training to coaches based on those guidelines so that coaches can better detect when a student athlete is exhibiting symptoms of conditions like anxiety, depression, disordered eating, and suicidal ideation. It would also teach coaches best practices for approaching students compassionately and referring them to appropriate resources.

With teen suicide rates on the rise, it is crucial we do everything possible to identify students at risk and get them help. *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training*, is a common-sense measure to safeguard the wellbeing of young athletes across our state. The guidelines and training it implements will empower coaches to create a culture of



health and safety for the students they mentor. On behalf of The Jordan McNair Foundation, we urge a favorable report.

Marty McNair Founder

# **SB0165\_FAV\_MedChi\_Education - Coaches - MH Trainin**

Uploaded by: Pam Kasemeyer

Position: FAV

# MedChi

*The Maryland State Medical Society*

1211 Cathedral Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201-5516  
410.539.0872  
Fax: 410.547.0915

1.800.492.1056

www.medchi.org

TO: The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chair  
Members, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
The Honorable Shelly Hettleman

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer  
J. Steven Wise  
Danna L. Kauffman  
Andrew G. Vetter  
Christine K. Krone

DATE: January 17, 2024

RE: **SUPPORT**– Senate Bill 165 – *Education – Coaches – Mental Health Training*

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The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the largest physician organization in Maryland, **supports** Senate Bill 165.

Senate Bill 165 requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), each County Board of Education, and the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association, to develop guidelines for public schools to train coaches to recognize indicators of mental illness and behavioral distress in students and requires public schools that offer an athletic program to provide training to their coaches. The legislation also requires the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), in collaboration with MDH, to develop guidelines for the training of coaches in public institutions of higher education regarding mental health and behavioral distress of their athletes.

Access to and the provision of mental health services has been a priority of the Maryland General Assembly over the last few years. However, critical to successfully providing needed services to individuals experiencing mental health challenges and behavioral distress is the identification of those needs. Identification of behavioral health challenges in children, adolescents, and young adults is particularly challenging, given the well-documented fact that many students do not recognize their own issues until they escalate and/or students hide their challenges out of fear of creating a negative impression of their skills, talents, and potential.

Coaches play an important role in the lives of their student athletes and may often be the first individuals to have an opportunity to identify and respond to mental health challenges. Providing training to coaches so that they have the knowledge and skills to identify and respond to their athletes' mental

health challenges will enable them to better provide initial support as well as refer them to appropriate resources. Proper training will also enhance a coaches' ability to create a supportive environment for their athletes, which can better promote positive mental health. The pressure to perform as well as the impact of injuries on student athletes impacts the likelihood that a student athlete may experience behavioral distress and various studies have found that the incidences in mental health challenges in student athletes is greater than the general population. Training coaches, as required by Senate Bill 165, will have a meaningful impact on addressing the mental health challenges of their athletes. For those reasons we request a favorable report.

**For more information call:**

Pamela Metz Kasemeyer

J. Steven Wise

Danna L. Kauffman

Andrew G. Vetter

Christine K. Krone

410-244-7000

# **Testimony in support of SB0165.pdf**

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB0165\_RichardKaplowitz\_FAV  
January 16, 2023

Richard Keith Kaplowitz  
Frederick, MD 21703

**TESTIMONY ON SB#/0165 - FAVORABLE**  
**Education – Coaches – Mental Health Training**

**TO:** Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

**My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#00165, Education – Coaches – Mental Health**

I spent 31 years from 1989 – 2019 working as a high school soccer referee in Frederick and Washington counties. During my time on the field, I frequently found players that did not exhibit proper behavior within the rules for the game and had to discipline them as outlined in the rules. Bursts of anger at both their opponents and at themselves showed that players sometimes exhibit both anger issues and depression resulting from how they saw themselves playing versus the actual results on the field.

Coaches in sport have a leadership role in education in teaching not just how to play a game but how their athletes express themselves in educational, social and athletic environments. They can build up player’s confidence and often become a sounding board for players to consult in personal issues at home or within the school environment. This bill attempts to mandate that we equip those coaches with a toolset to better fulfill their leadership and mentoring roles. Coaches will have a better understanding of how to interpret their players’ moods and help them respond in ways that fit the situations in the most positive ways. We will teach coaches how to react to support the mental health challenges student athletes face to effect better outcomes and produce healthier individuals who can solve their issues in the best possible ways. The training will also produce better coaches by giving them an understanding of their own reactions vis-à-vis their players so that they can speak and act appropriately when confronted with situations calling for compassion and understanding. They will be much better in alleviating times when the correct responses can be critical in a successful intervention to prevent further mental or physical harm to occur.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#0165.**

**SB165\_Hettleman\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Shelly Hettleman

Position: FAV

**SHELLY HETTLEMAN**  
*Legislative District 11*  
Baltimore County

—  
*Chair*  
Rules Committee

Budget and Taxation Committee

*Subcommittees*

Health and Human Services

Pensions



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410-841-3131 · 301-858-3131  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3131  
Shelly.Hettleman@senate.state.md.us

**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Senator Hettleman Testimony- SB165**  
**Education – Coaches – Mental Health Training**

Whether you are a parent, an aunt or uncle, a grandparent, or even someone who follows the news, you are likely well aware of the mental health challenges facing our youth today. Mental health issues among young people have only increased over the last few decades, reaching levels considered by experts to be a public health crisis. According to the Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD), 1 in 5 children and adolescents suffer with mental health problems. These mental health conditions come with real consequences later in life, impacting physical health and limiting opportunities. Despite the seriousness of this problem, the MHAMD says almost two-thirds of young people are not getting the help they need.

Young adults are at particularly high risk. This transitional period is a stressful developmental phase, now accompanied with concerns about climate change, gun violence, rising costs of goods and services and social media. An alarming 73% of college students reported moderate or severe psychological distress in 2021, according to the American Psychiatry Association.

Despite the efforts of universities and colleges to provide more comprehensive mental health services to their students, two-thirds of college students have not accessed these campus resources, as reported by [a recent survey](#) conducted by the American Psychiatry Association. Student athletes are not immune to this issue. A recent [report](#) in the International Journal of Environmental Research & Public Health has found that one in four student athletes are at risk of depression. This bill is a needed step towards making mental health care more accessible for this at-risk group.

The bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education and the Maryland Higher Education Commission, in collaboration with partners, to develop guidelines for public schools and higher education institutions to train coaches to recognize indicators of mental illness and behavioral distress in students. This presents a new mechanism to reach student athletes who may be struggling but are not being reached by existing mental health resources in schools. Coaches often serve as trusted figures for student athletes who spend lots of time with students outside of formal academic settings and are therefore uniquely positioned to identify warning signs and connect their athletes with needed services. These resources can also serve as a new and different way to monitor student wellbeing more broadly.

The adolescents and young adults of Maryland deserve high-quality, accessible mental health services and support from the adults in their lives who can connect them to the help they need. Though coaches are highly motivated to serve in this role and 67% of coaches surveyed want training on mental health, only 18% felt highly confident in their ability to link athletes to mental health resources, according to a national survey of coaches from The Aspen Institute. We must do more to support the coaches that often serve as lifelines for our student athletes, so that no one is left behind. This bill advances that important goal. Thank you for your support.



# **SB 165 - Support - MPS WPS.pdf**

Uploaded by: Thomas Tompsett

Position: FAV



January 15, 2024

The Honorable Brian Feldman  
Education, Energy, & the Environment Committee  
2 West – Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support – Senate Bill 165: Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training

Dear Chairman Feldman and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strive through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS and WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS/WPS strongly support Senate Bill 165: Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training. Mental health first aid is a training program designed to help individuals identify, understand, and respond to someone who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. Coaches have an important role in the lives of their athletes, and they can play a crucial role in helping them manage mental health challenges. Therefore, coaches should be taught to recognize indicators of mental illness and behavioral distress in students.

Coaches are often the first point of contact for young athletes struggling with mental health issues. By providing coaches with the knowledge and skills needed to identify and respond to mental health challenges, they can better support their athletes and help them access the resources they need. Mental health training can help coaches recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health challenges, provide initial support, and refer athletes to appropriate resources, such as mental health professionals. Coaches can also learn how to create a supportive and inclusive environment for their athletes, which can promote positive mental health.

Overall, providing coaches with mental health training can help them become better equipped to support their athletes' mental health and well-being. Therefore, for all the reasons above, MPS and WPS ask the committee for a favorable report on SB 165. If you have any questions with regard to this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at [tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com](mailto:tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com).

Respectfully submitted,  
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society  
Legislative Action Committee

# **THO support letter.pdf**

Uploaded by: Victoria Garrick

Position: FAV

To: Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Members of the House Appropriations Committee  
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

From: The Hidden Opponent

RE: Education – Coaches - Mental Health Training

On behalf of The Hidden Opponent, I want to register our support for the *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* legislation, which would require training for coaches to recognize signs of mental illness and behavioral distress in student athletes. The Hidden Opponent is a student athlete-led organization that works to provide mental health resources and programming to student athletes with the hope of reducing the stigma surrounding asking for help.

Student athletes can face immense pressure to succeed in their sport, which can negatively impact their mental health. According to multiple studies, college athletes have a higher risk for mental health issues than non-athletes. However, coaches are often not equipped to identify warning signs and connect struggling students with needed support. Our organization was founded by former University of Southern California volleyball star Victoria Garrick Browne. She shared her experiences with mental health conditions in a TedTalk at USC in 2017, and began advocating for student athletes' mental health and positive body image. She founded The Hidden Opponent that works to advocate, educate, and support student athletes through programming for both athletes and their coaches.

*Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training* will require the Maryland State Department of Education to develop guidelines for public schools and the Maryland Higher Education Commission to develop guidelines for public institutions of higher education to train coaches to recognize indicators of mental illness and behavioral distress in students who participate in athletic programs in public schools and public institutions of higher education. Public schools and public institutions of higher education that offer athletic programs would be required to provide training to coaches based on those guidelines so that coaches can better detect when a student athlete is exhibiting symptoms of conditions like anxiety, depression, disordered eating, and suicidal ideation. It would also teach coaches best practices for approaching students compassionately and referring them to appropriate resources.

With teen suicide rates on the rise, it is crucial we do everything possible to identify students at risk and get them help. *Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training*, is a common-sense measure to safeguard the wellbeing of young athletes across our state. The guidelines and training it implements will empower coaches to create a culture of health and safety for the students they mentor. On behalf of The Hidden Opponent, we urge a favorable report.

**SMCM SB165\_HB204 FWA Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Brandon Engle

Position: FWA

**Senate Bill 165 / House Bill 204**  
**Education – Coaches – Mental Health First Aid Training**  
**January 17, 2024**  
**Favorable with Amendment**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and honorable members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share St. Mary's College of Maryland's position on Senate Bill 165. In general, this bill requires various education segments – including high schools and institutions of higher education – to develop and offer mental health first aid training to coaches in their athletic programs.

As the number of individuals experiencing mental illness continues to increase, St. Mary's College of Maryland and our staff remain committed to supporting our students through comprehensive and holistic approaches. In addition to the traditional stressors faced by students as they transition to a college setting, student athletes face additional challenges due to training and performance requirements associated with their sport of choice. In light of these challenges, several years ago St. Mary's College of Maryland developed and implemented a Mental Health & Catastrophic Emergency Action Plan to ensure our coaches, athletic trainers, team physicians, Wellness Center staff, and administrators are aligned in their efforts to identify at-risk students. This action plan is reviewed and updated annually, and is intended to bolster our pre-existing Athletics policies, which are informed by and comply with the National Collegiate Athletic Association's [Mental Health Interdisciplinary Team Planner](#).

St. Mary's College of Maryland is deeply supportive of efforts to improve mental health services for our students, and suggests one technical amendment to clarify that, although coaches receive training to identify mental and behavioral health indicators of depression, trauma, et al., coaches may not be held liable in the event of adverse circumstances. For these reasons, I urge a *favorable with amendment* report on SB165.



Tuajuanda C. Jordan, PhD  
President

**FINAL SB165 Testimony - Oppose - AACPS.pdf**

Uploaded by: Grace Wilson

Position: UNF





## **SB165 – EDUCATION – COACHES – MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING**

January 17, 2024

EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

### **OPPOSE**

Grace Wilson, Legislative & Policy Specialist (410.440.1758)

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) opposes **SB165 – Education – Coaches – Mental Health Training**. This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), each county board, and the Maryland Public Secondary School Athletic Association (MPSSAA) to develop guidelines for public schools to train coaches to recognize indicators of mental illness and behavioral distress in students, including depression, trauma, youth, suicide, and substance abuse.

While AACPS supports steps that elevate mental health awareness in athletics and believes that coaches are a key component in supporting the mental health of student-athletes, we oppose legislation such as this which will result in an unfunded mandate to the school system. AACPS anticipates that significant funding will be needed to provide this additional training to public school coaches on mental health and behavioral distress required by this bill.

Furthermore, AACPS believes that this additional training for coaches is unnecessary given the mandates of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Blueprint) to enhance student health services. Specifically, the requirement of pillar four, objective five of the Blueprint is to ensure that student behavioral health needs are identified, and all students have access to behavioral health services through the school-based or community-based services. As part of enhancing student services, the Blueprint requires that local school systems provide behavioral health training to certificated school personnel who have direct contact regularly with students and develop and implement a standardized screening to identify students with behavioral health service needs using an evidence-based approach. AACPS believes that the student behavioral health needs will be adequately addressed through the implementation of the standardized screening, training for certificated staff, and development of student health services in both school and the community.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on SB165.

# **SB 165.Mental Health Training Mandate for Coaches.**

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: UNF

**BILL:** Senate Bill 165  
**TITLE:** Education - Coaches - Mental Health Training  
**DATE:** January 17, 2024  
**POSITION:** OPPOSE  
**COMMITTEE:** Education, Energy, and the Environment  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes Senate Bill 165 based on serious concerns with a bill that would mandate that school systems not only adopt policies but also provide training to all coaches to recognize indicators of mental illness in students.

MABE supports the bill's proposal that the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), each local board of education, and the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) develop guidelines for public schools to train coaches to heighten awareness regarding student mental health issues.

However, MABE opposes Senate Bill 165 in its current form based on objections to the bill provisions mandating universal training of coaches. In addition, the bill includes terminology, such as "mainstream athletics" that MABE believes should be conformed to references to interscholastic athletics, intramurals, and other school sponsored athletic programs. Lastly, MABE opposes the stand-alone nature of the mandate to train coaches, relative the provision of professional development for other school personnel. Professional development is essential, worthwhile, and expensive based on the unavoidable payroll expenditures for time allotted for the training. In this context, MABE strongly disagrees with the bill's Fiscal and Policy Note which indicates only minimal costs to implement. The bill clearly presents an unfunded mandate.

Again, MABE supports and advocates for the essential staffing and resources necessary to meet the mental and behavioral health needs of our nearly 900,000 public school students. The benefits and value of access to high quality school-based mental and behavioral health services for students and families, teachers and staff, and communities at large can hardly be overstated. Prior to the pandemic, evidence was mounting that additional resources were needed to provide the holistic array of social, emotional, behavioral and academic supports for all students. Then the pandemic saw a dramatic rise in students reporting experiencing anxiety and depression and other symptoms. Today, students and staff are coping with these accumulated challenges in an environment of educator and other professional staffing shortages.

Local boards of education, administrators, and staff place the highest priority on protecting our students' physical and mental health and welfare while under our care and supervision. Therefore MABE appreciates this bill's intent to enhance the level of mental health training for coaches. However, for the reasons outlined above, MABE requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 165.