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SB851\HB971 - Public Schools - Interscholastic Athletics - Student Eligibility Waiver and School Classification SUPPORT

Carrington & Associates, LLC, in memory of Chris Beisler, to express our for SB851/HB971. This legislation addresses critical aspects of interscholastic athletics, specifically focusing on student eligibility waivers and school classification.

Chris Beisler, a former client and dear friend, was a passionate advocate for the importance of fair and accessible opportunities in interscholastic athletics. Despite his passing just over a year ago, his commitment to this cause remains alive in the spirit of those who knew him. This testimony draws inspiration from the submission Chris provided in 2019, serving as a poignant reminder of his dedication to creating positive change in the realm of student athletics.

In his 2019 testimony, Chris emphasized the significance of ensuring equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their backgrounds or challenges. He believed in the transformative power of sports to shape character, instill discipline, and foster teamwork. Chris's words echo through time, reminding us that we have a responsibility to uphold these values in the legislative decisions we make.

I would also like to acknowledge the generosity of Sir Speedy, who, after reading Chris's testimony, refused to charge us for copies. This act of kindness exemplifies the shared commitment to the principles Chris held dear.

Carrington & Associates, LLC respectfully requests a favorable report for SB851/HB971. We believe that by supporting this legislation, we honor Chris Beisler's legacy and contribute to the creation of a more equitable and inclusive interscholastic athletic environment.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to witnessing the positive impact that SB851/HB971 can have on the lives of student-athletes across our state. Here is the text of Chris Beisler's testimony:

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SB891\HB0971 - Children Exempt From Public School Attendance - Participation in Public High School Clubs and Activities - Support

Good Afternoon Madam Chair and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Chris Beisler; I am the father of Jackson James Beisler who suffers from Acute Situational Anxiety. I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today in Support of HB0996. I would also like to thank Delegate Angel and the other bill sponsors for supporting this very important piece of legislation.

I am not here for political reasons; I am simply here trying to help my son. 35 states around the country already allow home schooled children to participate in athletic programs at their local high school; Maryland is far behind the curve on this issue. I respect the opposition that may point to additional costs to the system or the incorrect belief that all home schooled parents reject public school education. In my case, that is not true. I went to public school, my 4 other children have attended public school and if Jackson didn't suffer from this illness, he would attend public school as well.

Half way thru the 8th grade Jackson's mental illness started manifesting itself. He didn't want to go to school. He didn't want to be separated from his family, etc... It got so bad that we had to rush him to the hospital as he was threatening to commit suicide.

After 3 years of psychologists, psychiatrists, countless different medications, home hospital schooling, and 10s of thousands of dollars we were no closer to figuring out what was wrong. Thankfully athletics was always a place he could go and be social and not suffer. We applied for 504B designation (No Child Left Behind) status and received it. We were able to get him into the high school for the 9th grade.

He lasted about two weeks in the 9th grade in school but they were as difficult or more on Jackson, his siblings, and the family unit in general as the three years prior. We worked diligently as parents with the system to get Jackson into school. We were not able to accomplish that goal. As time went on and Jackson missed more school the school system became increasingly more impatient. Finally we received a letter stating the state was going to take us to court and sue us for Jackson not attending school.

At that point we were forced to remove Jackson from the school system and home school him. I could not afford attorneys to fight the state and certainly could not afford any penalty or damages they would seek. And all at the same time Jackson is not getting educated.

I have spoken with many parents in my situation. Each of us will gladly pay whatever costs are associated with our children participating on our local sports teams. I say ours, because our taxes pay for the services, fields, uniforms, equipment, referees, etc. that are a part of our local high school teams. Our children also have their siblings or other neighborhood friends who play on these teams, it helps build community.

HB0996 has sensible provisions that protect the school system while allowing children to participate in competitive sports with their peers. Please do not punish our children for philosophical differences that adults may have on broader issues. National numbers suggest that we are talking about less than 1% of home schooled children that will participate; we are not going to flood the local school systems with additional children. These will be isolated instances, but will mean the world to the children and families that get to benefit from this legislation.

Again, please think of the Tim Tebow's of the world, if he hadn't had the opportunity to participate on his local high school football team; he would have never earned a scholarship to play football at the

University of Florida, never had the chance to win a National Championship, a Heisman Trophy, earn a college degree, play professional football and move on to use his degree for whatever career choices he may choose. Give our children that same chance to live out their dreams.

As a father, I am begging you for a FAVORABLE Report on HB0996.

Please feel free to contact Darrell Carrington, Managing Director, darrell.carrington@verizon.net or 732-763-7398 if you have any questions or require additional information.