



## Maryland Soccer Foundation

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February 27, 2024

Maryland Senate  
Senator Brian Feldman, Chair  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support of SB 433 - State Department of Education - Soccer Opportunities Program - Establishment

Chairperson Feldman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Matt Libber, and I am the Executive Director for the Maryland Soccer Foundation and Maryland SoccerPlex. I am writing to you today to express our support for Senate Bill 433. The Maryland Soccer Foundation's mission is to support businesses and organizations that cater to the tourism industry through education, networking, and advocacy. As such, MTC asks the committee to vote in favor of this bill.

Youth sports participation has a major long-lasting impact on children's lives with many impacts lasting through adulthood. Youth sports participation provides benefits beyond those associated with physical activity, including benefits for psychosocial health and academic achievement. Benefits for youth include:

- Higher levels of self-esteem and confidence in their abilities
- Reduced risk of suicide and suicidal thoughts and tendencies
- Improved life skills, such as goal setting, time management, and work ethic
- Opportunities to develop social and interpersonal skills, such as teamwork, leadership, and relationship building.
- Improved concentration, memory, school attendance, and academic performance

According to Forbes magazine, "95% of Fortune 500 CEOs played college sports. Sports teach kids discipline, sportsmanship, teamwork, and how to win and **LOSE**. These are all traits that lead to success later in life.

More importantly are the health outcomes for children, especially in the current obesity epidemic. Children who play sports are more likely to continue to exercise in adulthood, are less likely to develop heart disease, diabetes, and other chronic illnesses. Starting a healthy lifestyle earlier makes it easier to maintain later in life. These factors are so important that U.S. Surgeon General started the National Youth Sports Strategy(NYSS) in 2018 as part of the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. I have included the current NYSS as part of this testimony.

This bill is important because it provides funding to meet kids where they are. While we have had 25 years of successful programming at the SoccerPlex, we recognize that we are not meeting all the needs of the children of Montgomery County. This is why we entered into a partnership with Montgomery County Public Schools to allow us to provide before school and after school



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programming for at-risk and low-income students in County public schools. One of the main factors we see in preventing kids from participating in sports is transportation. By doing the programming at the schools it eliminates or reduces the burden on families to bring their kids to the programs. While the program is still in infancy, anecdotally we have seen successes. Schools have reported back that they see less absences from these students and they are more attentive in classes. We have also seen kids in our school programs join our leagues and clinics at the SoccerPlex to continue their participation in sports outside of school. We hope to work with MCPS to track academic progress in the future. Providing this funding at the State level will allow more programs like ours to take place around Maryland and lead to the healthy long-term outcomes that are part of the National Youth Sports Strategy.

For these reasons, the Maryland Tourism Coalition asks this committee to submit a favorable report for this legislation and forward it a full vote within the Senate of Maryland.

Respectfully submitted,

Respectfully,

Matthew Libber  
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