



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
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DATE: January 17, 2024

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

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.

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