

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Cheryl C. Kagan
Vice-Chair, Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Please Support Senate Bill 0923 –
High School Sports Officials Services for Maryland Public Schools

Dear Chairman Feldman and Vice-Chairwoman Kagan:

I am offering this letter in support of Senate Bill 923 and asking that the Committee support and advance the Bill.

I am grateful to Senate Gile and her staff in hearing the concerns that my wife and I raised last summer about the disparity in pay suffered by officials for many girls sports in Maryland. Even a difference of ten or twenty dollars a game is impactful for many officials – especially those who are public employees or single parents who spend hundreds of hours working games to make extra money they need to make ends meet. Officials don't just work in one county or one school system; many travel to different counties, even adjoining states, to pick up as many games as they can. So the more games they do, the greater financial loss they suffer with the pay disparity.

There is no doubt that the Maryland General Assembly supports women and girls, and values them just as much as men and boys. And there is no doubt that girls and women can accomplish great things, in all kinds of fields. I think of U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski, my late Aunt Rosalie Abrams, who was Maryland Senate Majority Leader, my former colleague at Baltimore County government, House Speaker Adrienne Jones, and so many other incredibly smart, hardworking and accomplished women leaders. But leadership, determination, hardwork and self-confidence have to start somewhere, much earlier. Many learned these important lessons playing sports in middle and high school.

My background, and the impetus for this Bill is lacrosse. In many counties in Maryland, there is a significant pay disparity between what the lacrosse officials for the boys game and the girls game receive. Having played lacrosse in my school age years and into college, and having watched my daughter play at the highest levels in high school and college, I can tell you the girls and womens game is much more complex, more of a choreographed athletic ballet, than the boys and mens game. Both are great and thrilling to play, to watch and to officiate. They use the same field, same ball, goal and the objectives are the same.

There so many incredible female athletes across many sports who have come from Maryland – certainly from around the country -- who have excelled in college, as professional athletes and even Olympians. But, without supporting girls sports, many would never have had the opportunity.

In case you are not aware, Maryland is home to some of the absolutely best girl's lacrosse players in the nation. College coaches from around the country come to tournaments and high school fields in

Maryland to recruit top talent for their rosters, many offering athletic scholarships that many boys and girls around the country can only dream of – hoping that even one coach will come to watch them play. And, like So, having the ability to play girls lacrosse in Maryland creates important opportunities.

But the fact is that many girls games are cancelled, or have to be postponed at the last minute, because there are not enough officials to cover the games. Recently, one Maryland county was ready to cancel the girls high school season because of lack of officials willing to do the games for significantly less than what the boys officials were being paid. It is difficult to recruit and retain officials if they are not being treated fairly. It's bad enough for these officials to be yelled out, verbally harassed or even threatened by parents and having to be escorted safely to their cars after games. The least their government can do is treat them fairly and with respect. I am enclosing a recent article titled "Barriers to Female Officials in Sports" published by the American College Personnel Association that speaks directly to these issues.

Girls officials are primarily women (although many men also officiate girls games), and have been willing to take lower pay because they don't want to disappoint the girls who work hard to practice and want to play. But, it's time to recognize the commitment of these officials, and for the Maryland General Assembly to clearly state that girls sports are just as important as boys sports, and those who officiate girls games should be treated the same as those who officiate the comparable boys game.

The only concern I have is the language in the current Senate Bill 923 that imposes a requirement of "comparable rules" for a sport to be considered "similar." This creates a loophole that would permit local school systems to continue pay disparity between boys and girls games. Girls basketball uses a slightly smaller ball. At some age levels, volleyball net heights are lower for girls than boys. Some games have different time durations of a few minutes. Girls softball uses a bigger ball and is pitched differently than boys baseball. Boys lacrosse has helmets and pads and allows hitting the body, while girls lacrosse involves far less protective equipment and thus has different rules to prevent body contact. These differences in rules – mainly to recognize the musculo-skeletal differences between boys and girls – should permit disparity in compensation for officials handling these otherwise similar sports.

Rather, if the intent is to treat sports like boys/girls lacrosse, baseball/softball, boys/girls basketball, soccer, volleyball, etc. the same, then perhaps make the legislative intent clear in the language of the Bill by deleting the requirement of "comparable rules" and including the following language: "such as lacrosse, baseball/softball, basketball, soccer and other similar sports."

In conclusion, I applaud the objectives of Senate Bill 923 to require local governments to ensure that officials for similar boys and girls sports receive the same pay for the work they do. And I urge you to support this important legislation.

Thank you.


Doug Silber

Lacrosse Official and Trainer – Anne Arundel County
Former Lacrosse Chair – Baltimore County
Retired Collegiate Lacrosse Official

Enclosure: *Barriers to Female Officials in Sports* (B. Hietala and J.G. Archibald)

February 18, 2025

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
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Re: Please Support Senate Bill 923 –
High School Sports Officials Services for Maryland Public Schools

Dear Chairman Feldman and Vice-Chairwoman Kagan:

I am asking you to support and advance Senate Bill 923.

As a young girl in the 1970's, there was only boys lacrosse in Anne Arundel County, so I strapped on a helmet and some pads and played with the boys. I got checked and knocked down. But if I wanted to play the sport, I had no other choice. My mother, Nancy Murphy – who was busy raising six children and supporting my father's dental practice – decided she needed to do something. She reached out to Mike Busch – then the head of Recreation and Parks, and explained the need for girls to have the same opportunities in sports as boys. The result was the beginning of girls lacrosse programs in Anne Arundel County.

Girls lacrosse in Anne Arundel County eventually was responsible for turning out some of the most outstanding players, not only in Maryland, but in the entire nation. Mike Busch moved on to become Speaker of the House of Delegates. And, for my Mom's dedication and hard work to doing the right thing for her daughters, and other daughters and granddaughters, she was inducted – at age 88 - into the Chesapeake Chapter of the Maryland Lacrosse Hall of Fame.

My mother's strength inspired me to give back as well. After playing lacrosse at Frostburg State, and being a recently divorced single mom trying to raise three children, I went back to school, got my Masters Degree in Education and have been a proud Anne Arundel County public school teacher for the past nineteen years. In order to make ends meet, and help cover all the costs a single mother incurs with three middle school and teenage children, I became a lacrosse official. The extra money I earned from running many miles up and down the field really came in handy. I met many other women, public school teachers just like me, who put on their stripes and officiated games on wet fields sometimes in freezing cold, being screamed at by parents, just to make extra money to help with their family's financial needs.

Officiating girls lacrosse is physically and mentally challenging. You are constantly on the move; we typically run and sprint at least two miles or more in a high school game. The rules are complex, much more so than the boy's game. And the games are intense. As I Division I collegiate official, I can honestly say that many of the Anne Arundel public school games I officiate have players with far greater skill than many of the collegiate players. It's well known that some of the best players to ever play women's lacrosse at the collegiate and international level came from the State of Maryland.

So it was quite disturbing to learn that the officials handling the boys game in Anne Arundel County and many other counties were receiving a higher rate of pay than officials for the girls game. And I started to get feedback from friends I no longer saw on the field that they had stopped reffing because they weren't being paid fairly; and they weren't being respected.

So, like my mother did for me -- and the girls of Anne Arundel County -- many years ago, I decided I had to do something. I contacted my elected officials and explained my concerns about unequal treatment. They looked into the matter, found that it wasn't just lacrosse, but many other sports like basketball and soccer. And, now we have Senate Bill 923. When I told my 92 year old mother, she cried tears of joy!

Senate Bill 923 tells the girls and granddaughters of Maryland that they are just as important as boys and grandsons. It tells those that train and study to officiate their games that they are just as important, and valued just as much, as officials for the corresponding boys game. Therefore, I applaud the objectives of Senate Bill 923 to require local governments to ensure that officials for similar boys and girls sports receive the same pay for the work they do. And I urge you to support this important legislation.

Thank you.



Jennifer Murphy

Girls and Women's Lacrosse Official and Proud Daughter of Nancy Murphy

February 19, 2025

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Re: Please Support Senate Bill 0923 –
High School Sports Officials Services for Maryland Public Schools

Dear Chairman Feldman and Vice-Chairwoman Kagan:

I offer this letter in support of Senate Bill 923, which aims to equalize pay for officials (lacrosse in particular) for boy's and girl's sports (high school). Title IX indicated that it is illegal to have unfair treatment, attitudes or behaviors based on gender. Additionally, the Equal Pay Act of 1963 amended the Fair Labor Standards Act that ensured equal pay for equal work. This statute requires equal pay for officials.

Women officials currently are underpaid compared to men across sports and among states and counties. For me, I have stopped officiating high school lacrosse, after 15 years, due to the injustices observed between men and women's officials' payments.

I therefore urge you and the Committee to vote in favor of Senate Bill 923.

Sincerely,



Ann Greenbaum

National Elite CWLOA Official

803 Trafalgar Rd

Towson, MD 21204

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Re: Please Support Senate Bill 0923 –
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Dear Chairman Feldman and Vice-Chairwoman Kagan:

I ask you to acknowledge and address the issue of pay disparity for high school sports officials. With respect to girls and boys lacrosse, the majority of the officials for the girls game are women, and the majority of officials for the similar boys game are men. But, even though they use a similar sized field, similar game duration, similar goal and ball, and the game has the same objective and theme, the officials for the boys game receive significantly higher pay than the officials for the girls game. This is true in other similar sports as well – basketball, soccer and volleyball come to mind. This is not only generally unfair, and discourages individuals from becoming girls officials – it sends the wrong message.

Even now, one local county athletic department is willing to cancel all girls lacrosse games because it is refusing to accept the girls officials' proposal to pay them what they pay the officials for the boys game.

With the disparity in pay, it also becomes more difficult to recruit and retain officials. Without enough officials, games have to be cancelled. As a result, the girls who look forward to playing these games (and their parents and grandparents) lose out. Therefore, I applaud the objectives of Senate Bill 923 to require local governments to ensure that officials for similar boys and girls sports receive the same pay for the work they do.

I urge you to support this important legislation. Thank you.

Best regards,



Julie Lenkart

Girls Lacrosse Official (Chesapeake Board of Women's Lacrosse Officials) and Parent of Anne Arundel County Girls Lacrosse Player at Crofton High School

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Thank you.



Christen Eshleman
Girls Lacrosse Official
Anne Arundel County - CBOWLO Board

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Thank you.

 2-11-25

Elizabeth Eshleman
Supporter

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Thank you.



Jordan Whitehair
Supporter

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Gregory Eshleman
Supporter