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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of SB0923 - Public Schools - High School Sports Officiating Services
- Procurement Requirements**

Mr. Chair, Madame Vice Chair, and members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

SB092 would require Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to ensure that sports officials for boys' and girls' sports are paid at the same rate.

Background

During the interim, constituents Doug Silber and Jenn Murphy brought an unexpected issue to my attention—despite existing pay equity laws, high school sports officials for girls' sports were being paid less for performing the same work as officials for boys' sports. While current laws aim to prevent pay disparities based on gender within both girls' and boys' sports, they fall short in addressing pay inequities across girls' and boys' sports, regardless of the official's gender.

The Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) sets standardized pay rates for high school sports officials during playoffs statewide. Outside of that framework, Local Education Agencies (LEAs), through contracts with sports associations and other entities, determine payment rates for officials. This has led to inconsistencies between jurisdictions, and as detailed in Exhibit 1, multiple cases of pay disparities between male and female officials within both girls' and boys' sports.

Through my office's research, we also uncovered the complex network connecting LEAs, sports associations, "assigners" (who manage game scheduling logistics), and the officials themselves. Understanding these dynamics was crucial in shaping our approach to this bill.

Solution

SB0923 aims to promote pay equity in high school sports officiating by implementing the following requirements:

- **Equal Pay Standards:** Local school systems must reject any bid or proposal that results in different rates of pay or fees for officiating or assigning officials for comparable boys' and girls' high school sports.

- **Simultaneous Solicitations:** Solicitations for officiating services for similar boys' and girls' sports must be issued at the same time to ensure fairness in the bidding process.
- **Inclusive Bidding Options:** Local school systems may require that bidders include officiating services for both boys' and girls' sports within a single proposal.
- **Uniform Submission Deadlines:** If separate solicitations are issued for boys' and girls' officiating services, they must share the same submission deadlines.
- **Collaborative Bidding Flexibility:** Local school systems may also require prospective bidders to partner, ensuring that any bid for boys' sports officiating services is accompanied by corresponding bids for girls' sports.

These measures aim to close loopholes in existing pay equity laws and ensure fair compensation practices across high school athletics.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB0923.

Barriers to Female Officials in Sports.pdf

Uploaded by: Douglas Silber

Position: FWA

Barriers to Female Officials in Sports

By: Brett Hietala and James G. Archibald

Refereeing has historically been a profession targeted exclusively for men. In the history of soccer, male opposition to the inclusion of women is well documented. In 1921, the Football Association banned female teams from competing on official Football League pitches (Forbes, Edwards & Fleming, 2014). The public reasoning for this move was that the sport was dangerous for women when in reality it was truly because women's soccer was a threat to the idea of the sport being a man's game. Although this created a rocky initial relationship between females and the soccer community, the Football Association has since revised their restrictions in order to be more inclusive, however, there is still much work to be had in combating discrimination within the sport.

Despite the discriminatory start, more inclusive changes have been implemented in this new era. More women around the world are being appointed as referees for a variety of sporting events. Over the course of the past two decades, female refereeing has seen a dramatic increase in everyday sports. The first account of female referees in a professional setting was in 1991 where three female referees worked in a tournament organized by the International Federation of Association Football, otherwise known as FIFA. Although they were employed by the organization for this tournament, they were not actually accredited by the FIFA organization (Denoncourt, 2017). In 1994, FIFA appointed four female referees were appointed to the international FIFA list (Denoncourt, 2017). Since these small initial breakthroughs, there has been quite an increase in the number of female referees in the sporting world, with an increase of 26 female referees in 1995 to a total of approximately 350 today (Denoncourt, 2017). Although the number of female referees has increased in the past two decades, the percentage of female to male referees worldwide is still quite unbalanced.

Despite the increase in female referees in the sporting world, many steps still need to be taken before equality is achieved. In 2012, the commissioner of the National Football League, otherwise known as the NFL announced the first female referee in the history of the organization. This announcement was obviously met with praise from one part of society, as well as disdain and sexism from others (Antunovic, 2014). Many media outlets reported this event as a special milestone for females in the sporting world, which helps to represent the evolving progressive culture of society, specifically regarding the empowerment of women in a male-dominated society.

Within the past twenty years, there have been substantial challenges to the traditional idea of specific gender roles within society. The evolution of the feminist perspective and the increased awareness regarding women's rights have allowed for substantial progress and societal breakthroughs for women everywhere. Although progress has been made, there are still barriers that restrict female referees in the sporting community. These barriers are still

significant, but with intentional interactions and deliberate actions, gender barriers can be broken down in order to create a positive and inclusive environment for all gender identities.

Barriers

When analyzing the reasons for the lack of female referees in the sporting community, it is important to analyze the major barriers and societal obstacles preventing women from entering the profession. These obstacles negatively impact the recruitment of women within officiating and need to be addressed if an equal representation is ever going to be attained within the profession. Some barriers include sexism, lack of female recruitment for the profession, as well as negative stereotypes perpetuated from the spectators. This relentless hostility continuously aimed at women has drastic negative implications for females in the position and tremendously harms the overall wellbeing of the official.

Sexism from players, onlookers in the crowd and other male referees is one of the biggest examples of the barriers facing women who attempt to enter a male-dominated field. "If women want fucking equal rights then they need to learn how to referee" (Forbes et al, 2014, p. 521)! This represents just one of the many comments directed at female referees during an amateur men's football league game. Scenarios and outbursts such as this reaffirm the argument that female referees in a male-dominated sport trigger discrimination, sexism, and abuse from surrounding onlookers. In 2006, an amateur football coach named Mike Newell criticized a female referee and the Football Association by saying "She should not be here. I know that sounds sexist, but I am sexist" and "if you start bringing in women, you have big problems" (Forbes et al., 2014, p. 522). Openly sexist attitudes in male-dominated sports towards female referees are a huge component of why there is a lack of female representation within the refereeing community. Although reform to create more inclusive climates for women is needed and requested for by many, it is near impossible to reach if sexist attitudes and beliefs lie within the organization that recruits and hires the individual.

Sexist attitudes at the professional levels are still prevalent amongst some of the older more traditional folks who still hold positions of power within the professional level of FIFA officiating. Senior vice-president of the Football Association made an openly sexist remark stating that "A woman's place is in the kitchen and not on a football field" (Sale, 2014). This comment was met with a four-month suspension and demonstrates the differing opinions of individuals in regards to women within referee positions. Being a female within the male-dominated environment of refereeing in the sports world is a challenge that male referee counterparts can never truly understand, due to the unique challenges and instances of discrimination that they face.

An underlying cause contributing to the lack of females in refereeing positions seems to relate to sexist and misogynist opinions permeating throughout society. Male dominated roles and environments are especially toxic, and an entire culture shift is required before women can truly enjoy equality within not only the refereeing community but equality within society as a whole. By having the conversation about what struggles women face in the male-dominated world of sports, it will lead to conversations that will lead to increased equality across the world.

Discrimination and marginalization of female referees transcend into multiple types of sports, rather than just a few. Female referees within a suburban rugby union also acknowledge and endure sexist and harassing remarks while in their positions, and are also "aware of their token status within the association" (Baldwin & Vallance, 2016, p. 61). This mental anguish demonstrates the mental barrier that women already face before they even step foot on the field. Due to societal gender barriers and lifelong held portrayals of what it means to be a

woman, some female referees are somewhat manipulated into believing that they are unable to complete a task simply because of their gender identity. This could also be a reason for a lack of female interest in refereeing in the first place because the sheer idea of being a female referee in a man's world is overbearing and intimidating. Gender roles, societal expectations, and stereotypes are powerful tools that hold power over the mind, and can completely prevent an individual from partaking in certain tasks or activities.

Gender Roles and Sporting Recruitment

Cultural gender roles are another component contributing to the lack of female referees within society. Recruitment tactics for referee positions are targeted towards male audiences, and thus impact the lower numbers of female referees. On a broad scale, female sporting events are generally much more underreported than men's sporting events. Essentially, accomplishments within the realm of female athletics are portrayed to be lackluster and insignificant in comparison to the accomplishments of men (Musto, Cooky & Messner, 2017). This lack of female representation in the sporting world by media outlets could add to the lack of interest in refereeing by female participants (Custers & McNallie, 2016), and may even add to the overall societal level of sexism towards women. Female sporting events are seen as insignificant when compared to male sporting events, and the comparison between the two can lead to extremely sexist assumptions and statements and gender roles, gender identity, and female sexuality in general.

Although recruiting women to the sporting world through mainstream media is lackluster through traditional sporting news channels, the interest in empowering young girls through sport is of high interest within young readers in the form of books (Heinecken, 2016). Books authored by female athletes are consistently some of the top selling books in the United States and demonstrate the upcoming shift in the ideology of young people, and the overwhelming increase of feminism in the nation (Heinecken, 2016). This shift in the generation demonstrates a possible increase in female participation in sports as a participant, which can then increase the interest in female refereeing. It is also important for these young women to have a role model to look up to because research has shown that having a role model to look up to can help alleviate the impacts of harsh stereotypes that negatively impact the impact of the individual (Todey, 2013). By having a role model that an individual aspires to become, increased dedication and performance are likely. Unfortunately, there are very few female referees that serve as strong inspirational beacons for young girls who dream to pursue the career, however, having a general female model that young girls can look up to can help to provide them with support in all aspects of life. These passions can include the urge to follow their dreams, which could indirectly lead to an increased interest in joining a male-dominated profession such as refereeing at all levels of sport.

Intramural Sports

At the collegiate level, intramural sports allow potential undergraduate students the first opportunity of their lives to learn the intricate rules and regulations of specific sports. Gender roles can have a large impact on women in regards to their decision to enter a male-dominated profession such as intramural refereeing. These women who decide to work as an intramural referee stated that they tend to place a lower level of importance on gender roles in their lives (Flint, 2012). These same women stated who participate in refereeing also claim that working as an intramural referee helps to develop their leadership and communication skills, which were transferable skills that could lead to future career choices. An interesting aspect of being an intramural referee which is unique from all other levels of refereeing is the fact that you are officiating your peers. Intramural referees must find ways to

serve in a position of power over individuals who they might live with, have classes with, or individuals who they consider a friend (Flint, 2012). This is a unique challenge to intramural referees, and the intersecting role that being a female creates in addition to the other social identities may lead to a more negative experience within the intramural referee position that male referees may never experience.

Within almost every institution of higher education, there are core values and ideals that discuss the importance of inclusion and diversity on the college campus. Due to the fact that campus recreation has an obligation to carry out the mission of the university, it is essential to remember that college recreation needs to be heavily focused on inclusion. The National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association, otherwise known as NIRSA, has focused on advocating for minority and underrepresented groups within campus recreation environments. Through multiple training programs, social justice dialogues, and intentional conversations, NIRSA has helped to create a more inclusive and diverse environment for all identities, and thus assist in creating a more welcoming environment for all genders (Bravo, 2017).

Discrimination and Stereotypes

Discriminatory cultural stereotypes regarding women are prevalent negative barriers between women and pursuing a career as a referee. The idea that women are incapable of being successful and efficient referees in their respective sport simply due to their gender is a prevalent opinion within much of the sporting community. According to a 2014 study, former female officials stated that they experience a lack of perceived respect from male counterparts, inequitable policies, a lack of female role modeling, and an increased level of gendered abuse when compared to their male counterparts (Tingle, Warner & Satore-Baldwin, 2014). Together, the combined effects of these factors were substantially negative enough to force these female officials away from the profession of refereeing. Discrimination from fellow male referees tended to lead as the number one reason that female officials decided to leave refereeing, as various sexist comments and instances of exclusion led to a hostile work environment (Tingle et al, 2014). Incivility within the workplace has been shown to lead to decreased job satisfaction, burnout, and reduced retention rates and is a key aspect of the lack of retention of female referees in the sporting community (Tingle et al, 2014).

Spectator Harassment

Every day that female referees go to work, their gender, sexuality and overall qualifications for the position are attacked and questioned by others around them. (Forbes et al, 2014). These consistent attacks on gender identity are especially prevalent when the female referees make an honest mistake in officiating. According to a female referee, "When you make a mistake the first thing you hear is related to your gender, it's because you're female and not because you're a referee" (Forbes et al, 2014). When mistakes like these happen to male referees, onlookers tend to brush them off as simple mistakes, and never use these instances to attack their sexuality or their gender identity. Some female referees also note examples of onlookers attacking their sexuality by making assumptions about sexual orientation, or making sexually harassing comments. This showcases the sexist and discriminatory environment that female referees work in and highlights the gender gap between male and female referees in general. Female officials also bring up how they feel scapegoated when anything out of the ordinary happens within the game, such as excessively obnoxious fans, players or even coaches (Tingle et al, 2014). During situations that are out of the ordinary, the female referees claim that their gender identity is belittled and attacked, and some of the comments heard borderline on sexual harassment.

Within the professional realm, female referees are exposed to multiple levels of harassment from the crowd that male counterparts will never experience. For instance, in 2016 during a professional soccer game, a spectator shouted out that to the female referee that she needed to go home and do the dishes instead of being at the game (Polden, 2016). Following this sexist remark, the spectator was actually thrown out of the game, in which other fans cheered and applauded the removal. This example of support for gender equality and overall intolerance for sexist behaviors by the crowd assists in highlighting the rising support for women, and disdain for discriminatory behavior within society.

Implications for Practice

The struggle in recruiting and retaining women within male-dominated professions and environments is not an easy task and one that has many layers of complexity within it. The underlying issue within the lack of females in sporting official roles has to do with a patriarchal, male-dominated society. In order to entice more female officials into the male-dominated world of officiating, societal gender roles and expectations must be addressed and reduced. When thinking of the best way to combat this sexism and discrimination within society, one of the most logical places to start is at institutions of higher education. To eradicate sexist behaviors within society, it is important for institutions of higher education to encourage feminist behaviors and ideals within their goals for holistic student development. It is also essential for institutions to clarify what being a feminist actually is, and that it is a movement to end the exploitation, sexism, oppression, and harassment based on gender (Nicholson, 2011). This definition is extremely important due to the fact that too many people in society label feminists as simply man-haters. This is simply untrue, and if more people knew what being a feminist actually meant, society would be filled with people who identify with that title.

Sports are for all individuals and identities. Recruiting and retaining females within visible authoritative roles such as officiating can lead to increased societal change and reformation in regards to the equity of women (Tingle et al, 2014). Individuals need to be judged by their abilities and actions, rather than what their individual identities are. By creating more inclusive and healthy environment for female referees in sports, gender barriers will begin to break down and allow all people to pursue their dreams. As of current times, the constant threat of harassment, anger and unwarranted personal attacks on internal identities dissuade women to enter male-dominated fields such as refereeing. By having intentional conversations and encouraging societal wide acceptance of women and other minority identities, individuals will hold the power to truly pursue their dreams regardless of gender.

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Silber 8 Letters of Support SB923.pdf

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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
Chair, Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee
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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 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.

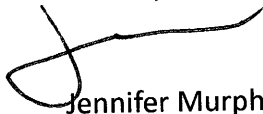
Officiating girls lacrosse is physically and mentally challenging. You are constantly on the move; we typically run and sprint at least two miles or more in a high school game. The rules are complex, much more so than the boy's game. And the games are intense. As I Division I collegiate official, I can 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

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee
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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 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

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Towson, MD 21204

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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 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

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:

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Thank you.



Christen Eshleman
Girls Lacrosse Official
Anne Arundel County - CBOWLO Board

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 2-11-25

Elizabeth Eshleman
Supporter

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Chair, Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

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Jordan Whitehair
Supporter

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Chair, Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

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Gregory Eshleman
Supporter