

SB0112_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

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TESTIMONY ON SB#0112 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Criminal Law - Second Degree Assault - Sports Official

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of/ SB#/0112, Criminal Law - Second Degree Assault – Sports

During my thirty-one years as a soccer official, I was assaulted three different times. The National Association of Sports Officials has documented state legislative efforts to deal with the increasing problem of sport officials being assaulted. ¹

In the journal *Global Sport Matters* article *Roughing Up the Refs...* Barry, Mano, founder and president of the National Association of Sports Officials (NASO) notes “It’s harder to do this under this constant scrutiny...NASO estimates that 30 percent of officials have not returned during the pandemic - and of those, between 20 and 25 percent are expected to never come back.” ²

I have been pushed, spit upon, had gear stolen, and deliberately tripped during my career, refereeing soccer matches at both youth and adult levels. The increase in incivility in our politics has spread to the fields in which games are being played. This bill makes the moral statement that improper conduct towards those who make playing our games safe and fun and equal for all is criminal when violence is applied towards officials. It adds a measure of protection for people willing to step forward to help make games possible. The loss of an official who quits due to abuse or fear of physical abuse harms everyone who needs their services to conduct a game. There are multiple videos on YouTube.com showing sports officials being assaulted.
https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=sports+officials+assaults

I urge Maryland to join the trend of states recognizing and dealing effectively with this problem.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB0112.

¹ <https://www.naso.org/resources/legislation/sports-officials-legislative-scorecard/>

² <https://globalsportmatters.com/business/2022/04/15/abusive-behavior-driving-youthsports-officials-away/>