

SB112 Assault of a sports official.pdf

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

January 14, 2025

SB 112 – Criminal Law – Second Degree Assault – Sports Official

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

According to the National Association of Sports Officials (NASO), close to 90% of sports officials report being harassed while before, during, or after a sporting event. Over 50% of officials have said that harassment made them feel unsafe while officiating, and 13% of sports officials have been physically assaulted by a fan, coach, or player.¹

Senate Bill 842 would specify that the crime of misdemeanor second-degree assault includes assault against a sports official. The misdemeanor would impose a fine up to \$2,500 and/or imprisonment not exceeding 10 years.

While it is already illegal for an individual to commit assault on another, sports officials are not currently included in the Criminal Law 3-203 article which authorizes police officers to make a warrantless arrest with probable cause under Criminal Law 2-203. SB 842 specifies that assault against a sports official can lead to an immediate arrest with proper probable cause.

Team sports at every level cannot exist without officials. Maryland should join 18 other states including Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and California in specifying that sports officials are included in second-degree assault.²

I respectfully ask for a favorable report on SB 842.

¹ Your Voice is Needed to Advance Legislation in Maryland

<https://www.naso.org/your-voice-is-needed-to-advance-legislation-in-maryland/>

² Laws on Assault of a Sports Official

[https://www.cga.ct.gov/2013/rpt/2013-R-](https://www.cga.ct.gov/2013/rpt/2013-R-0446.htm#:~:text=We%20found%2018%20states%20with,%2C%20Texas%2C%20and%20West%20Virgini)

[0446.htm#:~:text=We%20found%2018%20states%20with,%2C%20Texas%2C%20and%20West%20Virgini](https://www.cga.ct.gov/2013/rpt/2013-R-0446.htm#:~:text=We%20found%2018%20states%20with,%2C%20Texas%2C%20and%20West%20Virgini)
[a.](#)

Testimony from Officials.pdf

Uploaded by: Justin Ready

Position: FAV

SB0112 Support Letters

January 2025

From: wrestlnlarry@verizon.net <wrestlnlarry@verizon.net>
Sent: Monday, January 6, 2025 1:04 PM
To: will.smith@senate.state.md.us <will.smith@senate.state.md.us>;
marydulany.james@senate.state.md.us <marydulany.james@senate.state.md.us>
Cc: Mike Schilpp <mike@sherwoodforestclub.org>
Subject: Senate Bill 112

State Senators,

I fully support the above Senate Bill 112. I have been a Baseball Umpire for College, HS and the Cal Ripken Experience for 46yrs now, a Volleyball Official and a HS Wrestling Coach as well. This Bill will provide some level of safety for all Sports Officials in the State of Maryland. I have been assaulted during a baseball game at Overlea HS during an Adult Semi-Pro game. Though I was not severely injured that time, a law discouraging unruly assaultive behavior would be very helpful in protecting officials of sporting events in Maryland. Thank you.

Lawrence T. Shepard Jr

From: Joseph Schmitz <jfschmitz524@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, January 3, 2025 1:33 PM
To: Mike Schilpp <mike@sherwoodforestclub.org>
Subject: Senate Bill 0112 Protecting Sports Officials

Mike:

I am writing as a High School Volleyball referee and an assigner for referees in Baltimore City and the surrounding counties.

I support any legislation protecting Sports officials.

Thank you,

Joe Schmitz

BBOWS VB Assigner

From: Bayside Basketball <bboa157@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, January 3, 2025 12:24 PM

To: Mike Schilpp <mike@sherwoodforestclub.org>

Subject: Bill- 0112

Mike,

3
Good day, I am Secretary for Board 157 on the Eastern Shore. Our Executive Board would like to help get behind this important legislation.

Can you please provide additional information on what details our members should include in the letter and who the letter should be addressed to?

We will try and generate interest from our members.

Best

Mike Freiberg

--

BBOA157

P.O. Box 4121

Salisbury, Md. 21803

www.iaabo157.org

From: Orville Penn <oppenn@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, January 6, 2025 2:17 PM

To: Mike Schilpp <mike@sherwoodforestclub.org>

Subject: Support of Legislation

4
I sent my State Senator a letter in support of the legislation.

B. Orville Penn

January 2, 2025

To: The Honorable Justin Ready

Re: SB0112/HB1469: Criminal Law - Second Degree Assault - Sports Official

Dear Senator Ready,

I write to you today in support of SB0112/HB1469: Criminal Law - Second Degree Assault - Sports Official. I have been associated with one of the official's groups in Maryland for the past 20 years. In that time, I have witnessed the increase in escalating violence and threats against sports officials. On more than one occasion, the local law enforcement has had to be called to escort officials to their cars after events. I have witnessed spectators go to their cars and return to the field area with a firearm. I have witnessed officials being followed to their cars by what could be considered an angry mob of parents, being threatened, their faces, vehicles and license plates being recorded and posted to message boards. These actions not only threaten the official in the moment, but it also causes concerns for their families. Families worry not only for their loved one's safety and well-being but that the officials will be followed to their residence. Officials have the authority to eject spectators from the event venue, but then that sets up a scenario where the person lies in wait for the official.

I greatly appreciate you championing this bill, and hope that it will become law. Officials have no recourse to defend themselves. The situations are becoming more frequent, more violent, and increasingly concerning. It is only a matter of time until there is a reportable assault, or worse. Let's get this law into place, and publicized at all events, before personal harm comes to pass.

Thank you

Kelley Flanders

Odenton, MD

Anne Arundel County

5
From: Joel C <jcorona29@outlook.com>

Sent: Wednesday, January 1, 2025 11:54 PM

To: marydulany.james@senate.state.md.us <marydulany.james@senate.state.md.us>

Cc: Mike Schilpp <mike@sherwoodforestclub.org>

Subject: Can you help? Senator Bill 0112

Joel Corona

2109a E Boundary ave

Baltimore, MD 21237

jcorona29@outlook.com

443-560-4214

January 1, 2025

Dear Senator Dulany-James,

6
I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 0112, which is aimed at providing greater protections for sports officials in Maryland. I am a 21-year-old umpire working out of Baltimore County. Officiating has helped me pay for college and as an active member of the officiating community, I am deeply concerned about the rising incidents of violence and harassment directed at officials during sports events, and I believe that this legislation is critical in ensuring the safety and well-being of all those involved.

There are over 37,000 sports officials in Maryland who currently have no legal protection against violence while performing their duties. The lack of protection puts not only the officials at risk but also undermines the integrity of sports events and disrupts the fair and respectful environment that athletes and coaches rely on. Senate Bill 0112 offers a much-needed safeguard, ensuring that those who dedicate their time to officiating can do so without fear of physical harm or personal danger.

I respectfully urge you to lend your support to this bill. As an advocate for the safety of all Marylanders, your backing would be instrumental in ensuring that sports officials receive the respect and protection they deserve. This legislation is crucial for the future of sports officiating in our state, and I believe it will have a profound positive impact on the community.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am hopeful that you will support Senate Bill 0112 and help create a safer environment for Maryland's sports officials.

Sincerely,
Joel Corona
BBUA Umpire

7
From: Bill Cooke <billcooke730@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 31, 2024 3:59 PM
To: marydulaney.james@senate.st.md.us <marydulaney.james@senate.st.md.us>
Cc: Mike Schilpp <mike@sherwoodforestclub.org>
Subject: Fwd: SB 0112 2nd degree assault-sportd officials

Bill Cooke
410 241 8799

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Bill Cooke <billcooke730@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, Dec 31, 2024 at 3:54 PM
Subject: SB 0112 2nd degree assault-sportd officials
To: <will.smith@senate.state.md.us>, <marydulany.james@senate.st.md>
Cc: <Mike@sherwoodfprestclub.org>

8
Senators,

Please support sports officials throughout MD by passing Senate Bill 0112. We are losing officials every season due to the abuse we are receiving from some parents and coaches. Most officials are doing this work for the love of the game and for supplementary income. We are requesting that we be allowed to do this work without abuse. Without officials, the youth of our state will not be able to participate in athletics.

Thank you in advance for passing this bill.

William J. Cooke
HCUA, NEMOA, AAUA

9
From: ROBERT COLLINS <pirerpers@aol.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 31, 2024 12:44 PM

To: Mike Schilpp <mike@sherwoodforestclub.org>
Subject: Senate Bill 0112 Protecting Sports Officials

Mike

As President of the Norther Delaware Football officials Association I support your efforts to get Senate Bill 0112

10 Approved in the State of Maryland. I have attached the Delaware Law that is now in place. I don't have statistics but there have been arrest and prosecution of persons violating the Delaware Law.

Bob Collins

President NDFOA

2023 Delaware Code

Title 11 - Crimes and Criminal Procedure

Chapter 5. SPECIFIC OFFENSES

Subchapter II. Offenses Against the Person

§ 614. Abuse of a sports official; class G felony; class A misdemeanor.

Universal Citation:

11 DE Code § 614 (2023)

Learn moreThis media-neutral citation is based on the American Association of Law Libraries Universal Citation Guide and is not necessarily the official citation.

PreviousNext

§ 614. Abuse of a sports official; class G felony; class A misdemeanor.

(a) A person is guilty of abuse of a sports official whenever the person intentionally or recklessly commits the following acts against a sports official who is acting in the lawful performance of duty:

(1) Reckless endangering in the second degree, as set forth in § 603 of this title; or

(2) Assault in the third degree, as set forth in § 611 of this title; or

(3) Terroristic threatening, as set forth in § 621 of this title; or

(4) Criminal mischief, as set forth in § 811 of this title.

(b) For purposes of this section, the words "sports official" shall mean any person who serves as a registered, paid or volunteer referee, umpire, line judge or acts in any similar capacity during a sporting event. For purposes of this section, the words, "lawful performance of duty" means the time immediately prior to, during and/or immediately after the sporting event.

(c) Whoever violates subsection (a) of this section shall be guilty of a class A misdemeanor. Upon conviction for a second or subsequent offense under this section, such person shall be guilty of a class G felony. Notwithstanding Chapter 42 of this title, such person shall be fined not less than \$1,000 nor more than \$2,350. In addition to the fines imposed by this subsection, any person who is guilty of abuse of a sports official shall be prohibited from participating in and/or attending any organized sporting event for a period of not less than 3 months nor more than 12 months.

(d) Except as provided in § 922 of Title 10, and notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, the Court of Common Pleas shall have original jurisdiction to hear, try and finally determine any violation of this section, and any other misdemeanor violation of any offense set forth in this title which was allegedly committed during the same incident. Prosecution under this section shall not preclude a separate charge, conviction and sentence for any other crime set forth in the Code.

67 Del. Laws, c. 247, § 1; 70 Del. Laws, c. 186, § 1; 74 Del. Laws, c. 342, § 1;

From: Chuck Harmon <ballgame1313@yahoo.com>

Sent: Tuesday, December 31, 2024 8:57 AM

To: Mike Schilpp <mike@sherwoodforestclub.org>

Subject: Maryland Bill 0112

As a long time official for baseball and football, I wholeheartedly support Bill 0112. We as officials, should feel safe in our work environments, and not subject to verbal and or physical abuse. Thank You for considering this bill, and willingness to make it law.

Sincerely,

Chuck Harmon

Sports Official

ballgame1313@yahoo.com

443-713-7518

From: Charlie Wilson <charliewx@yahoo.com>

Sent: Tuesday, December 31, 2024 7:58 AM

To: will.smith@senate.state.md.us <will.smith@senate.state.md.us>;

marydulany.james@senate.state.md.us <marydulany.james@senate.state.md.us>

Cc: Mike Schilpp <mike@sherwoodforestclub.org>

Subject: Senate Bill 0112 - Protecting Sports Officials

Hello Senator Smith and Senator Dulany-James,

I am writing in hopes that we have your support with Senate Bill 0112 - protecting sports officials . As president of our local sport officials association, and 40 years as a baseball official, I can't tell you the importance of having this bill passed. I have lost so many officials over the past several years due to unsportsmanlike conduct (verbal and physical), and because of this, not just my group, but the entire country has a severe sports official shortage. Understanding that each state has its own laws governing this (and some that have virtually nothing), for Maryland sports official associations to gain ground on recruitment and retention, the passing of this bill is paramount.

According to the National Federation of High School Associations, more than 50 percent of sports officials have feared for their safety at some point in their career because of administrator, coach, player or spectator behavior. Sadly, **nearly 12 percent of all officials who responded have been physically assaulted during or after a sporting event.** Take a look at these alarming statistics from the National Association of Sports Officials for the state of Maryland:

<https://www.naso.org/survey/portfolio/sporting-behavior-2023/>.

Thank you for your time.

Regards,

Charlie Wilson

President & Senior Training Lead

Interstate Baseball Umpires Association (IBUA)

From: Robert Stroup <rstroup22@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, December 30, 2024 1:10 PM

To: marydulany.james@senate.state.md.us <marydulany.james@senate.state.md.us>

Cc: Mike Schilpp <mike@sherwoodforestclub.org>

Subject: MD SB112

Dear Honorable Senator James,

I am sending you this email regarding MD SB112 that is on the docket for the 2025 Regular Session, which would make verbal or physical abuse a criminal act against all sports officials in Maryland.

Getting this bill passed into law would not only benefit just me, but it would benefit the thousands of other sports officials across Maryland for today and **for tomorrow.**

As you may or may not be aware of, there is a major shortage of sports officials not just in Maryland, but across this great country. Too many officials have quit because the abuse by coaches, parents, and others has increased so badly that being out on the field or on the court just does not seem safe anymore. This is where I am kindly asking for your help and support to see that MD SB112 is read, reviewed, and discussed so it can become law to help protect every sports official who steps onto a field or a court.

Personally, I have been living in Harford County since 1988 and I have been umpiring youth and men's baseball leagues in Harford County since 2002 as a member of the Harford County Umpires Association (HCUA). Over the years, I have seen the passion of the sport grow and also the intensity of those on and off the field. No official, me included, should have to worry about whether a call that was or was not made going to trigger someone to the point that either verbal abuse or physical abuse is a possibility. No official should ever need to worry about walking to their car after a game and wonder who is following them or waiting for them to take measures to the next level. Fortunately, this has not happened to me personally – yet! But I know it has happened to my fellow officials and that is a shame.

I am currently the President of HCUA, and I have asked my fellow members to also send you an email asking for your support and to even include a personal experience or two where an “ugly” encounter took place with a coach, parent, or someone else. I know of a few that have occurred, but I will allow my members to describe it in “their own words”.

I kindly and respectfully appreciate your attention to MD SB112, and I look forward to seeing this bill passed in 2025 so that I and my fellow sports officials will be at ease the next time we walk onto a field or court.

With sincere appreciation.

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Thank you and have a great day!

Rob Stroup

President, HCUA

(410) 935-6943

From: Vance Morris <vance@chesapeake-solutions.com>

Sent: Tuesday, December 31, 2024 10:08 AM

To: justin.ready@senate.state.md.us <justin.ready@senate.state.md.us>;

will.smith@senate.state.md.us <will.smith@senate.state.md.us>

Cc: Mike Schilpp <mike@sherwoodforestclub.org>

Subject: SB 112

14

Dear Senators Will Smith and Senator Justin Ready,

As a swim official for high school, YMCA, and summer league competitions, and the president of both the Delmarva Swim Association and The Eastern Shore Swim Officials Association, I am writing to express my unequivocal support for Maryland Senate Bill 112, which seeks to protect sports officials by criminalizing assaults against them.

Officials play a critical role in ensuring the integrity, fairness, and safety of athletic competitions. Despite our commitment to fostering positive experiences for athletes and spectators alike, we are increasingly faced with hostility, verbal abuse, and, in some cases, physical violence from individuals who take the intensity of competition too far. The consequences of such actions extend beyond physical harm; they threaten the recruitment and retention of officials, the safety of our events, and the spirit of sportsmanship we strive to uphold.

Senate Bill 112 offers much-needed protections for officials by addressing these concerns. By prohibiting individuals from intentionally causing physical harm to referees, umpires, judges, and other officials during events and enabling law enforcement to act swiftly when such incidents occur, this legislation sends a strong message that abusive behavior will not be tolerated.

The shortage of sports officials is a nationwide crisis, and Maryland is not immune. Many individuals leave officiating due to safety concerns, leaving schools and leagues scrambling to fill vacancies. Protecting officials is not only a matter of personal safety but also a vital step toward sustaining the athletic programs that bring our communities together.

Sports are often heralded as teaching moments for young athletes—opportunities to learn resilience, respect, and teamwork. How can we claim to teach these values if those tasked with upholding the rules are left unprotected? By enacting Senate Bill 112, Maryland will set a precedent that aligns with the values of fairness, accountability, and respect for all participants in sports.

I respectfully urge you and your colleagues to support this legislation. The passage of Senate Bill 112 will protect those of us who dedicate our time and expertise to ensure a safe and equitable environment for athletes and spectators alike. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Vance Morris

President, Delmarva Swim Association

President, Eastern Shore Swim Officials Association

From: colin <cleisher147@hotmail.com>

Sent: Monday, January 6, 2025 8:12 PM

To: will.smith@senate.state.md.us; marydulany.james@senate.state.md.us; Mike Schilpp <mike@sherwoodforestclub.org>

Subject: Senate Bill SB112

Dear Honorable Senator James,

I am sending you this email regarding MD SB112 that is on the docket for the 2025 Regular Session, which would make verbal or physical abuse a criminal act against all sports officials in Maryland.

Getting this bill passed into law would not only benefit me, but it would benefit the thousands of other sports officials across Maryland.

As you may or may not be aware of, there is a major shortage of sports officials not just in Maryland, but across this great country. Too many officials have quit because the abuse by coaches, parents, and others has increased so badly that being out on the field or on the court does not seem safe. This is where I am kindly asking for your help and support to see that MD SB112 is read, reviewed, and discussed so it can become law to help protect every sports official who steps onto a field or a court.

I have been umpiring youth and men's baseball leagues in Harford County since 2012 as a member of the Harford County Umpires Association (HCUA). Over the years, I have seen the passion of the sport grow and also the intensity of those on and off the field. No official should have to worry about whether a call that was or was not made is going to trigger someone to the point that either verbal abuse or physical abuse is a possibility. No official should ever need to worry about walking to their car after a game and wonder who is following them or waiting for them. Fortunately, this has not happened to me. But I know it has happened to my fellow officials and that is a shame.

I kindly and respectfully appreciate your attention to MD SB112, and I look forward to seeing this bill passed in 2025 so that I and my fellow sports officials will be at ease the next time we walk onto a field or court.

Sincerely,

Colin Leisher

HCUA Secretary

From: Judy Cole <judyuic@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, January 8, 2025 11:02 AM

To: Jack Hutcherson <commish@usasoftballmddcde.org>

Cc: Mike Schilpp <mike@sherwoodforestclub.org>; Steve Zawierucha <uicsteve@usasoftballmddcde.com>; Ralph Eggen <reggen@usasoftballmddcde.org>; Brad Jones (ormond.b.jones@gmail.com) <ormond.b.jones@gmail.com>

Subject: Re: FW: Bill 0112

I support the bill also!

Judy Cole

From: Arentz, Steven Delegate <Steven.Arentz@house.state.md.us>
Sent: Wednesday, January 8, 2025 9:38 AM
To: Jack Hutcherson <commish@usasoftballmddcde.org>
Subject: RE: Bill 0112

Thanks Jack. I support the bill

Steve

From: Mark Jr <tmntjr69@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 8, 2025 12:15 PM
To: Mike Schilpp <mike@sherwoodforestclub.org>
Subject: Re: Senate Bill 0112

Mike,

Happy New Year.

I called the senators office and left a message. Let me know where the hearing ID as I can't see a location. I also broadcasted it on social media.

Reminder: I have been assaulted twice. Punched/stabbed

From: Michael Freiberg <mikefreiberg12@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 8, 2025 2:16 PM
To: Mike Schilpp <mike@sherwoodforestclub.org>
Subject: Bill- 0112

Michael Freiberg

130 Spinnaker Way

Chester, MD 21619

January 8th, 2025

Att: Senator Justin Ready

Dear Senator Ready,

I have been a High School Sports Official for over 25 years. I am in full support of Bill- 0112. Officials are at risk every time they take the court or field. This important Legislation will help to protect me and fellow officials.

Thank you,

Michael Freiberg.

mike

Best Regards

Michael Freiberg

From: rinbee@comcast.net <rinbee@comcast.net>

Sent: Friday, January 10, 2025 3:53 PM

To: marydulany.james@senate.state.md.us <marydulany.james@senate.state.md.us>;
will.smith@senate.state.md.us <will.smith@senate.state.md.us>

Cc: Mike Schilpp <mike@sherwoodforestclub.org>

Subject: Please Support MD SB0112

Dear Senators Dulaney-James and Smith,

I am writing to urge your support for MD SB0112. As a youth umpire for more than 20 years I have the pleasure of sharing the field with boys and girls playing the great game of baseball and quietly enjoying every great play. Unfortunately that joy is often tempered by abuse by coaches and parents. Fortunately I have not been victimized by physical abuse, but it does exist and the fear of verbal abuse turning violent is always in the back of my mind. There is only so much onfield officials can do to minimize the threat which is why this bill is so important to those of us who officiate sports and the children who play the games.

Your support of MD SB0112 will be greatly appreciated by everyone who enjoys youth sports.

Sincerely,

Ronald Bond

8 Willow Oak Court

Elkton, MD 21921

A proud member of the Harford County Umpires Association

From: Geoff Little <gblittle5@gmail.com>

Sent: Saturday, January 11, 2025 4:48 PM

To: marydulany.james@senate.state.md.us <marydulany.james@senate.state.md.us>

Cc: Mike Schilpp <mike@sherwoodforestclub.org>

Subject: MD Senate Bill 0112

Dear Honorable Senator James,

I am sending you this email regarding MD SB112 that is on the docket for the 2025 Regular Session, which would make verbal or physical abuse a criminal act against all sports officials in Maryland.

Getting this bill passed into law would not only benefit just me, but it would benefit the thousands of other sports officials across Maryland for today and *for tomorrow*.

As you may or may not be aware of, there is a major shortage of sports officials not just in Maryland, but across this great country. Too many officials have quit because the abuse by coaches, parents, and others has increased so badly that being out on the field or on the court just does not seem safe anymore. This is where I am kindly asking for your help and support to see that MD SB112 is read, reviewed, and discussed so it can become law to help protect every sports official who steps onto a field or a court.

Personally, I have been umpiring youth and men's baseball leagues in Harford County since 2022 as a member of the Harford County Umpires Association (HCUA). No official, me included, should have to worry about whether a call that was or was not made going to trigger someone to the point that either verbal abuse or physical abuse is a possibility nor should any official ever need to worry about walking to their car after a game and wonder who is following them or waiting for them to take measures to the next level.

I kindly and respectfully appreciate your attention to MD SB112, and I look forward to seeing this bill

passed in 2025 so that I and my fellow sports officials will be at ease the next time we walk onto a field or court.

Best,
Geoff Little
HCUA

From: rinbee@comcast.net <rinbee@comcast.net>
Sent: Friday, January 10, 2025 3:53 PM
To: marydulany.james@senate.state.md.us <marydulany.james@senate.state.md.us>;
will.smith@senate.state.md.us <will.smith@senate.state.md.us>
Cc: Mike Schilpp <mike@sherwoodforestclub.org>
Subject: Please Support MD SB0112

Dear Senators Dulaney-James and Smith,

22
I am writing to urge your support for MD SB0112. As a youth umpire for more than 20 years I have the pleasure of sharing the field with boys and girls playing the great game of baseball and quietly enjoying every great play. Unfortunately that joy is often tempered by abuse by coaches and parents. Fortunately I have not been victimized by physical abuse, but it does exist and the fear of verbal abuse turning violent is always in the back of my mind. There is only so much onfield officials can do to minimize the threat which is why this bill is so important to those of us who officiate sports and the children who play the games.

Your support of MD SB0112 will be greatly appreciated by everyone who enjoys youth sports.

Sincerely,

Ronald Bond
8 Willow Oak Court
Elkton, MD 21921

A proud member of the Harford County Umpires Association

Dear Senator,

23
I'm writing for support of 2025 Maryland Senate Bill 0112 - Protecting Sports Officials in Maryland. In recent years, I've seen many instances of youth sports officials quitting because of threats of violence and in some cases, actual assault. In my 18 years on the field, I've seen many cases of what some people would call "passionate fans", but when those fans are threatening the officials such as "I'll see you in the parking lot", we need alternate ways of protection aside from the classic fight or flight. I acknowledge we could suspend the game until the police come to remove that threat, but the response time could be impacted especially if the game is in a remote area.

Youth sports aren't the only games impacted by a lack of Officials. The National Federation of High School sports have reported about a 30% attrition rate due to violence against Officials and threats thereof. In all cases, the lack of Officials have led to countless games being canceled or postponed - and even more having fewer than the usual number of Officials on the playing field. As an example, in high school baseball there are usually 2 Officials on the field. Many games have been contested with only 1 official. With proper laws and protection, we can improve the quality and retention of sports officiating.

To conclude, I urge you to vote favorably on Senate Bill 0112. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Very Respectfully,

Paul A. Golden

Dundalk, MD (District 6)

BBUA Umpire

Re: Senate Bill 0112

Dear Senator,

24
I have been a referee/ umpire/ official for over 5 years now. I can not tell you the number of times that in the heat of the moment, or simply because someone wants to win or have their child win, that they dispute a call. It is not to say that they are a bad person, I just simply believe that they are not thinking of their action or what they are saying at that given moment. Typically, not professional, use of foul language or a gesture. I have thick skin, and I would not do it if I did not. However, I do have the ability to somewhat control the flow with technical fouls to a coach or player, a flag, or even removal if it escalates too far. Sadly though, there is an underlying fear that actions taken to these individuals could cause back lash after the game is over or in some cases, even during the game. Please truly consider getting this bill passed to protect officials moving forward.

Thank you

Keith Dressel

Robert M. Limpert
1338 South Dahlia Rd.
Bel Air MD, 21015
Robert.limpert22@gmail.com
410-937-9027

1/3/2025

25
The Honorable Senator Mary-Dulany James
Maryland State Senate
James Senate Office Building, Room 103
11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401
marydulany.james@senate.state.md.us

Subject: Urgent Support for Senate Bill 112: Protecting Sports Officials

Dear Senator James,

I am writing to you as a current baseball umpire, former High School Administrator, former High Coach, former Recreation/Travel coach and Parent to express my strong support for Senate Bill 112. This legislation is crucial for enhancing the safety and well-being of sports officials in Maryland.

I have witnessed firsthand the increasing instances of verbal and physical abuse directed towards sports officials. This unacceptable behavior not only undermines the integrity of sporting events but also creates a hostile and intimidating environment for those who dedicate their time and expertise to ensuring fair play.

Senate Bill 112 takes a significant step in addressing this critical issue by:

- Clearly defining and criminalizing assaults against sports officials: By specifically recognizing assaults on officials as a distinct offense, this legislation sends a strong message that such behavior will not be tolerated.
- Empowering law enforcement: The provision authorizing warrantless arrests for certain assaults against officials provides law enforcement with the necessary tools to swiftly apprehend individuals who engage in these harmful acts.
- Promoting a safer environment for all: By deterring violence against officials, this bill will contribute to a safer and more positive experience for all participants in youth and adult sports.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 112. Protecting our sports officials is not only about ensuring their safety but also about upholding the values of sportsmanship, respect, and fair play that are essential for the healthy development of our young people.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Limpert", written over a horizontal line.

Robert Limpert (Jan 3, 2025 09:50 EST)

Robert M. Limpert

Baseball umpire, former High School Administrator, former High Coach, former Recreation/Travel coach and Parent

To: MD State Senate Office of Senator Ready
Re: Senate Bill 0112

Dear Senator Ready,

I understand you are sponsoring and putting forward a bill to enact added protections towards Maryland Sports Officials due to acts of violence and/or harassment. I wish to extend my support for such legislation and protections.

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I am a sports official here in Maryland. I still regularly umpire baseball games from men's levels to 8yr olds. I still regularly officiate basketball games, men's down to the little tykes learning to dribble the ball. I have done football, I have done soccer, I have done ice hockey.... I have officiated plenty of sports and, unfortunately, I have witnessed bad situations and even more unfortunately experienced even worse situations. I was physically assaulted in the '80s during a men's baseball game by an ejected player who returned after the game with one thing on his mind. If the other team had not jumped to my aid (I was already flat on my back) I am not sure just how far this attack could have gone. I was harassed with objects thrown at me all the way back to the car. More recently I was called into the middle of a football field after a partner was threatened/harassed by multiple fans and the head referee decided such threats were serious enough to warrant a call for the police and have all the fans removed from the site for our safety. I have been pulled off a basketball court by my supervisor due to referees in the adjacent court being threatened and we needed to leave the building for safety reasons.

As a sports official we are charged with having to make judgement calls and enforce rules. In my various training classes we were always taught: "for every whistle or non whistle, for every ball/strike, fair/foul, out/safe call that is or is not made...half the crowd will be disappointed with the official." "We need to have a thick skin." "We need to not hear everything, not take it personally." "The quicker you move to the next play the better so that the previous play does not have time to build to some sort of tipping point." We are completely unbiased in such actions, yet some fans, some coaches, some players take issue that we are against them, or their child, or the game itself.

Of course I have been yelled at, cursed at...I can take that....I have played sports, some of this is an attempt to get the official's attention in hopes a close call may go "their" way next time. I understand that, to some extent it's a part of the game. But there does need to be something in place on the rare occasion where a tipping point is reached, a line has been seriously crossed. To my dismay the current Maryland legal process restricts the level of assistance we can get from police who were not present to witness the altercation, we can expect to receive minimal, if any, assistance in determining who the perpetrators are and no rights to seek reparations since information is withheld w/o abilities to follow through. We sports officials wear the uniform, we've accepted that verbal harassment will happen and comes with the territory....but the uniform is looked upon as a bullseyes to some fans,

coaches, and players who feel they have been cheated, wronged, or simply because they have paid a fee they now have a right to advance that venting into a more physical nature with direct access to the source of that frustration.

We are seeking some added protections that similar "uniforms" are afforded here in Maryland....police, fire, emergency, state officials... I am not looking for the exact same levels of protection as the forementioned, I do not kid myself to hold us out to that level. But I do want to see a step forward where we have some rules in place to afford us a small added level of protection, some added assistance in seeking help when needed, some added assistance to recoup damages in those extreme cases. That the general public is made aware that we are working in an "official" capacity and that Maryland will acknowledge us as such and back us up accordingly.

I appreciate your efforts to help get this in front of your peers in the Maryland legislature and greatly appreciate your personal efforts to bring this matter to their attention. Any assistance you can help to bring these necessary protections will be very appreciated by all that wear the uniform.

Sincerely,
Frederick Leary
Harford County, Maryland
410-688-4652

December 30, 2024

SB112 Testimony_MSF.pdf

Uploaded by: Matt Libber

Position: FAV



Maryland Soccer Foundation

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January 14, 2025

Maryland Senate
Senator William Smith, Chair
Judicial Proceedings Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support of SB 112 - Criminal Law - Second Degree Assault - Sports Official

Chairperson Smith and Members of the Committee,

My name is Matt Libber, and I am currently the Executive Director of the Maryland SoccerPlex, and I am providing testimony in support of Senate Bill 112. For the last 25 years, I have been involved in youth and amateur sports as a coach, referee, tournament director, league commissioner, MSYSA State Cup Director, and now a facility and club administrator. In those 25 years, the landscape of youth sports has changed in both big and small ways, but one clear trend over that time is the escalation of abuse faced by referees, umpires, and officials.

Sports officials are a core element to youth sports ecosystem and every year it becomes harder to find enough referees to cover all the games. Nationally there is a shortage of referees for **EVERY** sport. Recruitment and retention of sports officials has become a core aspect of national governing bodies, leagues, and local sports organizations. More sports officials leave the game every year than new referees come into the game. When asked why referees leave the game, the most common answer is "they are tired of the abuse." Players, coaches, parents, and spectators over the years have escalated this abuse from common yelling to physical confrontations on the field, on the sidelines, and in the parking lots of sports facilities across the U.S. There seems to be this sense of entitlement by these individuals to say and do what they want, when they want, and where they want. Leagues and facilities can put in protocols and procedures to try and minimize this abuse, but this cannot provide full protection, and we have little means for meaningful consequences when rules are broken. In 2024, a national survey by the National Association of Sports Officials reported that 51 percent of male officials and 53 percent of female officials have felt unsafe or feared for their safety while officiating during the 2023-24 seasonal year. There needs to be substantial penalties through the law to help protect sports officials.

To provide a real-life example of one of these incidents, at the SoccerPlex in 2023 during an MLS Next event, the highest level of boy's youth soccer in the US, after a game parents from a team from Pennsylvania got in their cars at the field and followed the referees back to the referee tent, on the other side of the park. This demonstrated a willful intent to confront the referees. If it had not been for the hired security staff present during the event this most likely would have ended in a physical altercation. It seems ridiculous that we have to hire security personnel to monitor a youth soccer tournament, but that is the world we currently live in.



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The lack of meaningful consequences has led to a decline of 26% in sports officials across the United States. This decline impacts not only the ability to provide programming to youth athletes but also impacts the safety of the officials. In more and more games, there is not a full complement of officials for games. This may mean that a soccer game that would normally have 3 officials, now has only one referee by themselves. They no longer have the backup and support of the two other officials to look out for their partners on the field. If this game takes place at a location with only one field, you now have one person alone amongst 80-100 people with no support. This is not a situation anyone should find themselves. This decline in the number of referees is also driving up the cost of youth sports. As the number of referees declines, the cost for referees goes up. When I was still officiating 10 years ago, the higher end of youth soccer referees were making \$40 a game, on average. They now are making \$80-\$120 per game depending on the age group and level of play. This is not a sustainable model for youth sports. We are literally driving families out of the game due to high cost.

We need to find a way to keep sports officials in the game, and bring new sports officials into the ranks, if we want to continue to provide opportunities for our children to play sports. Cutting down on the abuse of sports officials has to be a priority. While this Bill will not solve all the problems, it is a good start to curb the abuse that takes place on every field across the State. Real consequences for individuals who escalate yelling into violence will send a message across the State that we will not stand for this any longer.

Respectfully,

Matthew Libber
Executive Director
Maryland Soccer Foundation
Maryland SoccerPlex
Soccer Association of Montgomery
mllibber@mdsoccerplex.org
301-528-1480 (o)
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Testimony in support of SB0112 - Criminal Law - Se

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB0112_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

01/16/2025

Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703-7134

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/>