

Unfavorable Testimony for HB 1393

Committee Members,

My Name is Marc Mesaros and I am the President of the Maryland Football Coaches Association, which represents football coaches and football players, as well as the communities that they represent across the state of Maryland. Our organization is not in favor of HB1393, titled "Youth Sports Programs - Registrations, Personnel, and Policy." My constituents all have ties to the children and families that make up local recreation councils and organizations that run youth sports across Maryland, and not one of the coaches that I've talked with about HB1393 is in favor of this legislation.

We are against this bill because as an organization, we feel that it is not needed and redundant. Private schools, recreation councils, and any entity that seeks to use a facility owned or governed by another organization (such as a school or local recreation council) already have the responsibility to ensure that coaches are qualified and have attended mandatory training in things like first aid, CPR, concussion protocol, heat acclimatization, and child safety. Youth coaches are also responsible for following the removal and return-to-play policies that are well known as best practices and are required to have gone through a fingerprint and background check to ensure that they have no history of criminal behavior, as well as carry the proper identification card issued by the recreation council. The bottom line is that the recreation councils in Maryland, which are run by their respective county's recreation and parks departments, and the private schools or organizations that sponsor youth sports programs, do an excellent job of ensuring that the people working with our children are quality people who have been trained and understand the policies that govern youth sports in that locality. Public or private, failure to hold coaches accountable for these requirements would open that organization up to a crippling liability risk, so it is something that they must do, not only because it is right, but because it is necessary. In our opinion, this legislation is another layer of bureaucracy that is unnecessary and burdensome and should not be adopted as law.

This legislation also violates the concept of local control. The state of Maryland has a great tradition of local control, and it works well, because it gives communities the ability to make choices that work best for them and their families. An example is the MPSSAA; it is a self-financed state entity that enforces the rules associated with public school sports. It costs the taxpayers nothing and relies on the local school systems to self-police and self-report violations, and the system works well. There are 24 counties including Baltimore City in this state, and each one has their own academic eligibility standards, but it works because the localities hold people accountable for that standard, whatever it may be. The system we have in place works and should stay in place. Also, some coaches I've worked with are concerned that this legislation may be costly to them monetarily. For instance, will the state incur fees on the people that volunteer to coach to pay for the maintenance of

this registry? Unlike the MPSSAA which is cost-neutral, there is no mention in the bill of the costs associated or how that aspect of governance will be financed. That concerns people who not only volunteer, but pay for their own fingerprint and background check, among other costs that they pay out of their own pocket just to help young people. The coaches that we've spoken to feel that the current system works well, and they do not see the need for another layer of oversight. Youth sports in Maryland do not need state oversight; youth sports in Maryland need quality adults that are committed to helping young people grow into good citizens. Passage of this bill could discourage people from doing exactly that and have a negative effect on youth sports. I encourage the House of Delegates Ways and Means Committee to give this bill an unfavorable vote. Should you need to contact me, my information is below.

Sincerely,

Marc Mesaros

President

Maryland Football Coaches Association

marcmfca@gmail.com

443-500-9351