

Testimony in Support of HB1272 – Youth Sports Safety Advisory Commission

Presented to the Ways and Means Committee

March 5, 2025

FAVORABLE

Free State PTA (FSPTA) represents over 70,000 volunteer members and families in over 500 public schools. As the state's premier and largest child advocacy organization, Free State PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities, and a strong advocate for public education. We are here to ask for a favorable report for House Bill 1272.

Establishing a Youth Sports Safety Advisory Commission aligns with Free State PTA's position to ensure the safety of all Maryland students. Injuries, especially those that aren't properly managed, can have long-term consequences that persist into adulthood. Injuries can take a toll on a student athlete's mental health, leading to feelings of frustration, depression, anxiety, or a sense of loss from being unable to participate. Student athletes also cope with stress and pressure and have to manage expectations related to competition. Creating safeguards for athletes helps avoid these negative emotional consequences.

When athletes know their safety is a priority, they can focus more on improving their performance and enjoying the activity, rather than worrying about potential injuries. They are also able to train consistently and perform at their highest potential. Recovery time is minimized, and they can develop their skills over time without setbacks caused by preventable injuries. Proper injury prevention and safety practices help athletes develop a strong foundation and, in some cases, encourage them to remain involved in sports throughout their lives, either in professional or recreational settings. This is essential in promoting healthy lifestyles. When athletes feel safe, they are more likely to stay involved in sports, leading to greater levels of physical activity and fostering a love for physical fitness.

Ensuring that athletes are safe helps cultivate a culture of respect for both the sport and the well-being of others, teaching athletes and coaches to prioritize health and safety, not just performance. By creating and maintaining high safety standards, all students can play, compete, and improve without unfair disadvantages. Protecting student athletes from injury and maximizing their safety is essential not just for their immediate physical health but for their long-term well-being, development, and success in athletics and in life.

This is a very important bill because a Youth Sports Safety Advisory Commission will help safeguard both the physical and mental health of young athletes, ensure that best practices are followed, and foster a culture of safety and awareness in youth sports, allowing student athletes to thrive both on and off the field, which is why Free State PTA urges **the committee to make a favorable report on HB 1272.**

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