

Delegates of the Maryland General Assembly,

I am writing in support for the passage of HR1185, Homeschool Students in Maryland – Right to Play.

Background. My roots in Maryland began the Summer of 2001 when I reported to the United States Naval Academy as a “plebe” in the Class of 2005. I am still serving on active duty at NAS Patuxent River where I own a home in Leonardtown.

The choice to homeschool. My wife and I have five very gifted children (15, 12, 10, 8, 8) – they serve alongside me but, quite frankly, without the choice or the recognition. For example, my youngest (8 yr old twins) have moved five times - four of which were from coast-to-coast. The impact on a child’s education with that amount of upheaval is significant. They didn’t chose to say goodbye to friends, to farewell their favorite playground, or try out for new sports teams in a strange town. Therefore, based on their sacrifice, my wife and I made the difficult decision and sacrifice to homeschool them. This would at least provide consistency in curriculum, teaching, and education while I was on active duty.

Experiences to date. We began our homeschooling work in 2016 and have experienced how several states across the country manage these choices and families in our situation. Each location had a community with our chosen curriculum and the familiarity/consistency was very beneficial for our family. Additionally, living in Washington (state), Rhode Island, California, and Florida our kids had full access to public school sports. This was exceptionally value-added for both my family and our local community as we developed strong, lasting relationships. Both my wife and I are trained (sports) coaches and contribute to the community year-round in that capacity. It has been a hardship for my family to move to Southern Maryland last Summer and face exclusion from school sports with their friends and neighbors.

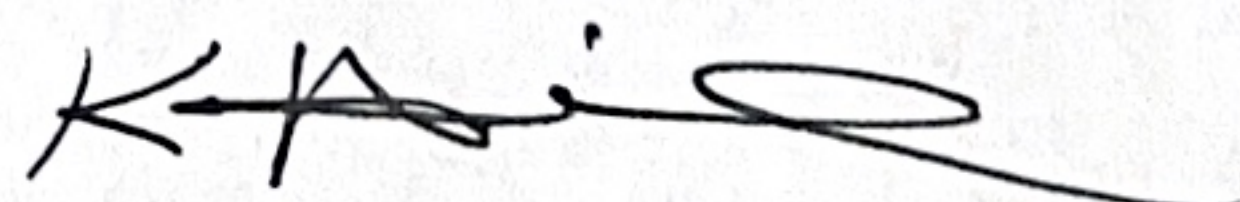
Advantages. Going back to how I became a Marylander – my roots at USNA. What initially brought me here was sports; I was recruited for the wrestling team. Suffice it to say, the role that organized sports play in childhood development cannot be overstated. Hundreds of studies support the physical and psychological value. My children have learned, and continue to learn, what all of us what in Maryland’s youth – learning teamwork, respect, discipline, hard work, resilience, and these are just to name a few.

Counterarguments. Current Maryland law specifically allows homeschooled children to participate in JROTC and standardized testing at their local public school. By not naming sports, it prohibits access. I have seen this work across the country in both “red states and blue states” because it is fundamentally about children’s access to public goods. Since it does not require additional funding, I do not see sufficient justification to withhold a public good from a specific sub-set of children based on parental education choices. Lastly, the bi-annual homeschool review process in Maryland is more thorough and comprehensive than any others we have participated in and I believe this is more than sufficient mitigation for anyone seeking to take advantage of this proposed bill.

Conclusion. I strongly support HR1185 in that it corrects a lack of access to tax-payer funded benefits for a specifically named group of citizens in the state of Maryland. This public benefit is sports. For kids.

I would like to offer my help and support in any way-

Very respectfully,



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