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TELEPHONE: (410) 767-0376
FAX: (410) 333-3111



MEMBER OF THE
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF
STATE HIGH SCHOOL
ASSOCIATIONS

R. ANDREW WARNER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

BILL: House Bill 935 **DATE:** February 24, 2025
SUBJECT: Public High Schools – Venue Specific Emergency Action Plans – High School Football Games **COMMITTEE:** Ways and Means
POSITION: Information Only
CONTACT: R. Andrew Warner
410-767-0376
robert.warner1@maryland.gov

EXPLANATION:

The Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) submits this written informational only testimony for House Bill 935, *Public High Schools – Venue-Specific Emergency Action Plans – High School Football Games*. The MPSSAA acknowledges the critical importance of ensuring the health and safety of student-athletes and supports measures that protect their well-being during high school sports events. House Bill 935 would require each local educational agency to include in their venue specific emergency action plans requirements for a certified athletic trainer or ambulance at all high school football games. The MPSSAA respectfully requests the following information be taken into consideration regarding the possible impacts of House Bill 935.

The MPSSAA estimates that more than 200 junior varsity and varsity football games are played each week across the state between late August and early December, totaling over 2,000 games annually. The MPSSAA is concerned that House Bill 935 could have unintended consequences that lead to cancellations of games or even the dissolution of football programs at certain schools due to the lack of available certified athletic trainers and the logistical and financial challenges of scheduling an ambulance with appropriate medical staff. These challenges could be especially pronounced in underserved communities, which already struggle to hire and retain certified athletic trainers and face financial constraints that limit their ability to secure the necessary ambulance services and personnel.

Furthermore, House Bill 935 does not account for other qualified medical providers—such as physicians and paramedics—who are trained to provide coverage at high school football games. While certified athletic trainers work under the supervision of licensed physicians, the bill does not identify physicians as qualified medical providers. Similarly, paramedics, who specialize in advanced life-saving techniques and are often among the first responders to medical emergencies at football games, are not recognized in the bill as qualified providers. Given the nationwide shortage of certified athletic trainers, many schools already rely on physicians and paramedics to meet medical coverage needs at these events.

The MPSSAA also has concerns regarding the potential logistical issues that could arise from the implementation of House Bill 935. If a student athlete requires transport due to injury or if an ambulance is needed for another emergency, local educational agencies and sports officials may be forced to cancel or delay games mid-competition. This would lead to additional costs for school-based transportation, official fees, worker compensation, and the rescheduling of games, further straining already limited resources.

The MPSSAA supports appropriate medical personnel at high school football games and asks the committee to consider the potential impact of House Bill 935 on the broader landscape of high school sports in Maryland, particularly in terms of access, affordability, and the ability to maintain safe and equitable sports programs.

The MPSSAA respectfully request that you consider this information as you deliberate **HB 935**. For further information, please contact Andy Warner at 410-767-0376, or Robert.warner1@maryland.gov.