

Dear Members of the Ways and Means Committee, My name is Benjamin Ridgely, and I am an 8 year-old homeschool student in Baltimore city, Maryland.

I am writing to express my support for HB 1185, the Homeschool Students in Maryland – Right to Play bill.

When I was in public school I LOVED being a part of a VEX robotics team that my mom, a STEM teacher and leader hosted at the Mount Washington elementary middle school in Baltimore city. VEX and other STEM clubs have access to the city owned tools, parts, electronics, and ability to compete in championships that homeschoolers can't afford on their own. Homeschool kids deserve to excel in STEM arenas as well as sports!

I love sports and have always wanted to play on a team, but because I am homeschooled, I do not have the same opportunities as my friends who attend public school. Sports teach teamwork, discipline, and perseverance, and all children—regardless of where they go to school—should have the chance to participate. Many other states allow homeschoolers to join public school teams, and Maryland should too!

Please support HB 1185 so that all students, including homeschoolers like me, can have the same opportunities to grow, compete, and play. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely, Benjamin Ridgely