

The Honorable Jheanelle Wilkins  
Chair, Ways and Means Committee  
House Office Building  
6 Bladen Street, Room 130  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: Support for HB 1097 – Public High Schools – Sports Injury Recordkeeping and Reporting – Requirements**

Dear Chair Wilkins,

My name is Mario A. Roberts. I have testified before this body previously regarding high school athletics and injuries—specifically football, in my case. Today, I am again testifying in support of **HB 1097 – Public High Schools – Sports Injury Recordkeeping and Reporting – Requirements**.

**My life today is what happens when injuries go untracked.**

When my injury occurred in 1985, it was a time much different than today. We did not have video cameras at every game. In fact, the game in which I was injured was scheduled to be videotaped, but there was a light rain outside and there was no solution or plan in place for that. At the time, games being recorded was sporadic at best, regardless of the weather.

We also had absolutely **no injury recordkeeping**. Had injury records been required, I would have never played in the game that led to my catastrophic neck injury—an injury that left me paralyzed for much of my life. As I write this today, I am a bedridden quadriplegic as a result of that injury.

It was a game I should never have played in because I had severely injured my knee in the game prior. In that previous game, I had torn my knee up badly. However, I was taught to be a warrior, not a whiner. So I did my best to hide my injury so that I could continue to play. I knew that if my coaches had been tracking injuries, they would have kept me out of games until it healed. I used the lack of tracking to hide my knee injury. In the next game, I severed my C6 vertebrae and became a quadriplegic, paralyzed for life.

At the time, I was playing in DC Public Schools. The failure to track injuries cost them dearly. DC ultimately paid me the largest out-of-court settlement to a resident in its history because of that accident. As a result, they immediately made crucial changes: tracking injuries, ensuring proper equipment, having trained personnel present, and requiring ambulances at football games. **My injury became the gateway for those changes.**

**Your body has the power today to help ensure there is never another Mario A. Roberts—a quadriplegic because a student athlete’s injuries went untracked.**

**I respectfully urge the committee to give HB 1097 – Public High Schools – Sports Injury Recordkeeping and Reporting – Requirements a favorable report so that no other student athlete has to become the next version of me.**

Thank you immensely for hearing my testimony and for your consideration of this legislation.

Respectfully,

Mario A. Roberts

Beltsville Resident

Former DC Public Schools Student-Athlete