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Maryland State Ways and Means Committee
131 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Homeschool Students Extracurricular Activities Bill - HB 1528

To the Distinguished Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

Hello, my name is Lisa Saunders and I am currently a homeschooling parent and taxpayer in Talbot County. I'm writing today to encourage the Ways and Means Committee to vote favorably with amendments to pass the Homeschool Students Extracurricular Activities Bill (HB 1528). I believe the bill should exclude subsection D and all students who are trying out should be treated equally regardless of the way they are being educated. I also believe that if subsection D stays in place the administering of this bill could lead to more confusion, frustration, and discrimination in the future. The other amendment I would ask for is to replace the verbiage of "may" to "shall" throughout the length of the bill to ensure that equal access is allowed throughout the state of MD.

Homeschool families pay local property and income taxes that fund public schools, yet their children are excluded from publicly funded programs. This is a tax equity issue, not just a policy preference. Adding a homeschool student to an already existing activity has minimal, if any, additional cost with little to no additional administrative burden beyond existing processes. In addition, wider talent pools improve teams, boost school and community engagement, and can even increase attendance at games, activities, and school performances.

I have two very well educated and athletic elementary aged children. One is currently attending a local public school while one is currently homeschooled. While their schooling currently looks different, they are both working equally hard. I am thankful that there are many different ways to educate our children as I have seen first hand how different education strategies work for one child but may not work for the other. I have seen how participating in sports and other extracurricular activities can greatly improve their self esteem, work ethic, and health. Given our location there are not many recreation leagues above elementary to middle school age. This would put a dire strain on our family as it would be hard to travel to participate in sports. I would love it if they have the ability to try out for local school teams, theater productions, band, and/ or other clubs when the time comes.

Homeschooling is a legally recognized option for schooling in our state and our children deserve equal access to these activities. This bill asks for nothing more than fair access to programs already funded by all taxpayers. I respectfully urge the committee to vote yes on HB 1528. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Best regards,
Lisa Saunders
Cordova, MD
Homeschooling Parent