

Testimony in Support of Maryland House Bill 1278

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Coach Ashley Montgomery, and I am writing in strong support of Maryland House Bill 1278.

I represent **Mentoring Through Athletics**, a youth sports-based mentoring program that leverages the power of athletics to bring communities together and provide critical resources to under-resourced students and families. Through structured sports programs, mentorship, and community engagement, we help young people develop leadership skills, confidence, discipline, and a strong support network that extends beyond the playing field.

Programs like ours demonstrate that athletics can be a powerful gateway to positive youth development. When young people have access to safe environments, positive role models, and opportunities to build teamwork and resilience, they are far more likely to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. At the same time, families benefit from increased community support and connections to resources that can strengthen household stability.

The framework proposed in House Bill 1278 would create new opportunities for organizations like ours to expand our impact. By supporting youth development initiatives and community-based programs, the state would be investing in prevention, empowerment, and long-term success for Maryland's young people. Programs rooted in mentorship and athletics are uniquely positioned to engage youth who might otherwise fall through the cracks, especially in underserved communities.

Mentoring Through Athletics has seen firsthand how access to mentorship, structured activities, and community support can transform a young person's trajectory. Young people like DeAndre, Julio, Brenda, Carlos and Aiden come from families who want the best for them but may not be in the most ideal situations to provide the desired outcomes. We believe the initiatives supported through House Bill 1278 will help expand these opportunities across Maryland and strengthen the network of organizations working to support youth and families.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to give a favorable report on House Bill 1278.

Thank you for your time and consideration and for your commitment to supporting the well-being and success of Maryland's youth.

Sincerely,
Ashley Montgomery, Executive Director
Mentoring Through Athletics
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