



MICHAEL PHELPS FOUNDATION

Testimony on HB 73
Michael Phelps Foundation
Submitted to Maryland House Ways and Means Committee

February 22, 2026

Michael Phelps Foundation
PO Box 7
Litchfield Park, AZ 85340

Dear Chair Wilkins, Vice-Chair Feldmark, and Members of the Ways & Means Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 73, legislation to establish water safety and swimming curriculum for students in the state of Maryland.

We are pleased to provide this written testimony on behalf of the Michael Phelps Foundation. Founded by Olympic champion and Maryland native Michael Phelps, our Foundation is dedicated to empowering children through water safety, healthy living, and wellness programs. Through our evidence-based programming, we help young people build lifelong skills that support physical and emotional well-being, promoting confidence and healthy lifestyles in and out of the water.

Since its inception, the Michael Phelps Foundation has prioritized water safety education through our IM Program and our partnership with the Boys & Girls Club of America and Special Olympics International. We recognize the important of legislation that would ensure public school students in kindergarten through 8th grade receive water safety education and we commend the state of Maryland for advancing this critical endeavor.

Basic swimming ability and water safety knowledge are among the most effective tools available to prevent drowning — a largely preventable public health issue. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 55 percent of U.S. adults have never taken a swimming lesson, and more than 4,500 people drowned annually in the United States between 2020 and 2022. Maryland families continue to experience these tragedies. A population-based study of pediatric drowning incidents in Maryland found that young children, particularly ages 0–4, face the highest risk of fatal and severe drowning events. Incidents occur in both residential pools and natural waterways across the state, demonstrating that water safety education is not optional but essential.

HB 73 represents a proactive, prevention-focused approach that equips children with life-saving knowledge before a tragedy occurs. Establishing statewide curriculum standards ensures equitable access to water safety education regardless of geography, background, or access to private swim instruction. By introducing these skills early, Maryland has the opportunity to reduce preventable deaths, strengthen community safety, and create lasting public health benefits.

We also know from experience that when children develop confidence in the water, that confidence carries into other areas of their lives and supports social-emotional growth, goal setting, and overall well-being. The long-term impact of this bill has the potential to span generations.

The Michael Phelps Foundation would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the state as this legislation moves forward. Our IM Program water safety curriculum could serve as a resource to support implementation in Maryland's public schools.

We respectfully urge your favorable support of HB 73 and thank you for your leadership and commitment to protecting the health and safety of Maryland's children.

Sincerely,



Nicole Phelps
President, Michael Phelps Foundation



Karen Linhart
Executive Director, Michael Phelps Foundation