

My name is Melanie Mobarek and I have been a resident of Maryland since 2002 and a homeschool mom of three since 2009. I am in favor of HB1043 Right to Play with amendments to the bill.

My children have been negatively impacted by Maryland's current laws by not allowing them to participate in public school sports and activities. Even though two of them have already graduated from high school, I am hopeful that my third child, a 10th grader, will be able to participate in public school sports and activities.

I believe that my children and home educated children in Maryland have the right to equal opportunities and benefits from the same educational opportunities as their peers. They should be allowed access to public school libraries, sports and auditoriums. Just because I have chosen to educate my children at home should not mean that they are denied the ability to compete at higher levels, gain team experiences or possibly be recruited by college athletics. By not allowing them the right to play, you are denying them opportunities to college and career pathways.

My children have and are currently volunteering in the community through Teen Court, CarePacks, and Civil Air Patrol. If they were allowed to participate in clubs and organizations sponsored by our local public school, imagine the greater impact that they could have on our community.

When my oldest child was in high school, I noticed that our local high school was sponsoring an event to educate parents about financial aid for college. I asked to attend this event but was denied just because my child was home educated. Why would a tax funded facility deny educating their own tax paying citizens? When my daughter wanted to take the PSAT, our local high school denied her the ability to take it at the school. We eventually found a private school over an hour away on the western shore that would allow her to take the exam there. By not allowing her the opportunity to take this test, she was denied potential scholarships awarded by the College Board and college scholarships.

One of the most common reasons that I hear against homeschooling my children is that they are worried about their socialization skills. Allowing my children the right to participate will allow them to develop those skills, learn how to be part of a team, develop time management, and have the opportunity to learn from high quality coaches.

My oldest son graduated from college in three years because he was able to take advantage of dual enrollment classes while in high school. In college, he participated on the Speech and Debate team. He would have rather played baseball or ran track, but because he was denied those opportunities in high school it did not allow him the pathway forward to pursue it at the college level. Living on the eastern shore of Maryland, there were no other opportunities for him to pursue those sports at a competitive level than through the public school. In middle school, he was on the all-star team for our community baseball league. When the high school

coach found out that I intended to continue homeschooling him through high school, he intentionally stopped working with him individually because it was a waste of his time to coach an athlete that could never be on the high school baseball team.

My daughter just graduated from high school and is on the synchronized skating team at her college. She also is planning on graduating in three years on a full tuition scholarship and a current 4.0 GPA. She also could have greatly enhanced any sport team that she participated on had she been allowed the chance.

I would amend the bill so that it states that “a public high school MAY allow a homeschool student who is not enrolled in the school to participate in an athletic activity sponsored by the school to the same extent that a student who is enrolled in the school may participate in the athletic activity.” That should be amended to say “a public high school SHALL allow a homeschool student...” It is better to have clear rules that can be clearly enforced rather than allowing local bureaucrats to adopt rules that vary from county to county. There also needs to include a section to force a change to MPSSAA to allow for the eligibility of homeschoolers. I also disagree with, “A public high school must give placement priority to a student enrolled in the school if there are a limited number of spaces available for students in a given athletic activity.” Homeschoolers should be allowed equal access to these activities. This could possibly allow for homeschoolers to be discriminated against when attempting to participate in these activities.

I implore you to adopt HB1043 with the requested amendments. This bill is a low cost and minimally burden bill but the positive impacts on homeschooled students in Maryland and in the community is immeasurable.