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March 2, 2026

Members of the House Ways and Means Committee
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD

Re: Support for HB1043 – Right to Play

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is LaJean Burns. My husband Mark and I have homeschooled our four children in Maryland for twenty-two years, faithfully complying with and often exceeding state requirements. I am writing in support of HB1043.

Before homeschooling, I was a multi-sport athlete in volleyball, basketball, and track and later coached volleyball at a private school, finishing with an undefeated season. I understand firsthand what athletics develop in young people: perseverance, discipline, teamwork, resilience, and the ability to win and lose with integrity. We have always wanted our children to grow through those same experiences.

Of our four children, our three sons have always been athletic and have excelled in football and basketball. When we explored varsity-level homeschool options, however, they were not realistic. Basketball required an hour drive each way for practice several times a week, with games often hours away. Football required forty-five minutes each way, five nights a week, for a five-month season, with some games involving out-of-state travel. Participation costs began around \$5,000 per athlete. For many families, including ours, that structure makes competitive athletics inaccessible.

We pay taxes that support our local public schools and their athletic programs. Our children live in these communities alongside their peers, yet they are not permitted even the opportunity to try out.

HB1043 does not guarantee roster spots. It simply allows homeschooled students to compete for a place on a team, with enrolled students maintaining priority when space is limited.

Maryland would not be alone. Thirty states already allow homeschool participation in public school athletics in some form, including twenty that require open access by law. These policies are functioning successfully across the country.

I respectfully ask you to support HB1043 and provide homeschool students the same opportunity to earn a place on their local teams through hard work and ability.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
LaJean Burns