
TO: House Ways and Means Committee

BILL: House Bill (HB) 837 - Education – Student Athletic Activities – Physical Examinations and Cardiovascular Prescreening

DATE: February 25, 2026

POSITION: Letter of Information

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is providing additional information regarding HB 837 - Education – Student Athletic Activities – Physical Examinations and Cardiovascular Prescreening, which establishes requirements for high school interscholastic athletics preparticipation physical examinations, including the addition of a cardiovascular screening component.

HB 837 outlines timelines for when a physical examination may be conducted, establishes education and training expectations for those administering examinations, and requires local educational agencies (LEAs) to report certain information to the Maryland Department of Health (MDH). While MSDE supports the goal of safeguarding student athletes, the Department seeks to highlight existing practices and potential implementation concerns related to HB 837.

Through mutual agreement with the State’s 24 LEAs, MSDE authorizes the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) to administer interscholastic athletics in accordance with the Maryland State Board of Education regulations set forth in COMAR 13A.06.03. MSDE recognizes the intent of HB 837 to ensure that students participating in interscholastic athletics are appropriately screened for potential cardiac conditions. Notably, the MPSSAA—guided by its Medical Advisory Committee, which includes physicians, pediatricians, athletic trainers, and school health professionals—has already identified this need. The current MPSSAA preparticipation physical form, last updated in May 2024, includes a cardiac prescreening component along with guidance for addressing identified irregularities.

HB 837 requires MSDE, in consultation with the MDH, to develop guidelines designed to increase health care provider knowledge and awareness of cardiovascular prescreening for children participating in youth sports. The development and oversight of health care provider training, continuing education, and related medical policies fall outside MSDE’s statutory authority and professional expertise. MSDE does not have jurisdictional oversight of the medical community and would face significant challenges in fulfilling this requirement.

Additionally, HB 837 mandates that a preparticipation physical examination be conducted no earlier than 90 days prior to the start of the academic year. This provision raises equity, access, and financial concerns for families and the medical community. Most insurance providers cover only one physical examination per 365-day period. Requiring students to obtain a physical within a 90-day window before each academic year—while also complying with insurance limitations—may create access barriers for families and capacity

challenges for medical providers.

Further, the 90-day requirement creates an inconsistency in the timing of cardiovascular prescreening. While it would apply to fall sports beginning in August, it would not align similarly with winter or spring sports beginning in November and March, respectively, raising questions about equitable application and the underlying rationale for the specified timeframe.

For further information, please contact Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of Government Affairs, at 443-571-5461 or Laurel.Cratsley@maryland.gov.