

**BILL:** House Bill 817  
**TITLE:** State Department of Education - Interscholastic Athletics Eligibility Waiver  
- Graduate Athletes  
**POSITION:** OPPOSE  
**DATE:** February 12, 2021  
**COMMITTEE:** Ways & Means  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes House Bill 817.

This bill would allow a non-public school student who has graduated from high school in 2021 to participate in high school sports in the 2021-2022 school year. MABE opposes this bill in light of the disruption it would introduce into the management of interscholastic sports programs offered in Maryland's public schools.

Local boards of education recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures have presented enormous challenges for all students, families, and educators, including the impacts on interscholastic sports in the spring of 2020 and the 2020-2021 school year. However, MABE believes that the disruption of allowing students and non-students to participate in interscholastic sports programs in the coming school year outweigh the intended benefits.

Interscholastic sports programs in Maryland's public schools are conducted in accordance with the standards developed by the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSA) and the regulations adopted by the State Board of Education. Since 1991, interscholastic sports in Maryland have operated in accordance with the "Master Agreement Outlining the Interscholastic Structure for Public Schools in Maryland," which establishes the responsibilities of MPSSA, MSDE, and local school systems. Local boards of education believe that this system of regulations and oversight is working well.

In particular, Maryland places a high priority on establishing and maintaining a statewide interscholastic athletic system that assures that sports activities are a part of and contribute toward the entire educational program. House Bill 817 would disrupt this balance by introducing a significant separation between the status of high school athletes who are no longer enrolled students, the enrolled students in the educational setting, and the sports team on which the students and non-students are participating.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 817.