

BILL: Senate Bill 638
TITLE: Public Schools - Student Athletics - Requirements and Reports
(Elijah Gorham Act)
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
DATE: March 8, 2022
COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports Senate Bill 638, with amendments to modify the proposed emergency equipment requirements.

First, MABE supports the provisions of the bill requiring local school systems to report on the relationships and between public high schools and affiliated sports teams. MABE believes these reporting procedures will provide greater transparency and improve accountability for all sports activities in any way affiliated with a public high school. Students, families, and school administrators will benefit from the additional scrutiny facilitated by this legislation.

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. To be clear, interscholastic sports programs in Maryland's public schools are generally 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. However, many other private sports clubs and entities operate high school sports programs that are affiliated with a public high school. Therefore, MABE supports Senate Bill 638 to complement the already rigorous governance and accountability system for high school interscholastic sports.

MABE is requesting several amendments to eliminate or modify the scope of mandated administrative procedures, reporting requirements, equipment procurement, and staff training provisions. MABE requests the removal of proposed mandated reporting of the names of school personnel trained in the use of defibrillators or in heat acclimatization as an unnecessarily prescriptive reporting requirement relating to a continuously changing roster of coaches and other staff. MABE requests removal of the proposed mandate that a stock tank or inflatable pool be present at all interscholastic athletic practices and events as not well-suited as one-size-fits-all approach for all types of sports practices and events. In addition, MABE does not believe there is sufficient time to ensure compliance with the new staff training requirements or mandate to develop and distribute athletic emergency plans by the beginning of the 2022 school year. Therefore, MABE requests amendments to extend any new staffing or training being mandated to the 2023-2024 school year.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 638 with the amendments described above.