

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY

2644 Riva Road • Annapolis • Maryland • 21401

BILL: HB1210 EDUCATION – PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND YOUTH SPORTS PROGRAMS – PHYSICAL SPORTS

HEARING DATE: MARCH 2, 2018

COMMITTEE: WAYS AND MEANS

POSITION: OPPOSE

CONTACT PERSON: Jeanette Ortiz, Esq., *Legislative & Policy Counsel* (410.703.5352)

The Board of Education of Anne Arundel County opposes **HB1210 EDUCATION – PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND YOUTH SPORTS PROGRAMS – PHYSICAL SPORTS**. This bill would establish several restrictions and requirements to address child head injuries from sports including 1) prohibiting “physical sports” for elementary and middle school age individuals at public school or as part of a youth sports program; 2) requiring high school students to complete a course regarding head injuries prior to participating in interscholastic athletics or a youth sports program involving “physical sports” on public school grounds; 3) requiring coaches of youth sports programs that involve “physical sports” to review information regarding head injuries and make that information available to high school athletes; 4) requiring the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to develop standards for treating head injuries including that a school nurse be notified and requiring specified academic accommodations for students with head injuries; and 5) requiring that certain individual be at every practice and game, and that individual be responsible for final decisions regarding a student’s removal from or return to play.

Anne Arundel County Public Schools has been a leader in concussion risk and management training as well as in providing information to our coaches, students, and parents about the risks associated with concussions. We recognize the seriousness of traumatic brain injuries and have taken many steps over the past decade to enact programs, policies, and continual monitoring of the health and safety of students.

In 2011, a new law established a statewide system of standards, training, and public awareness in order to protect Maryland’s student athletes from head injuries and concussions. In 2013, the Traumatic Brain Injury Task Force and developed multiple regulations and recommendations for local school systems regarding the health and safety of student-athletes as it relates to concussion awareness, identification and treatment. As a result of the work of this group, COMAR 13A.06.08 Head Injuries and Concussions in Extracurricular Athletic Events was adopted by the State Board of Education, placing in regulation many of the components found in House Bill 1210. Since 2013, school systems have implemented the regulatory requirements as established by the State Board. Local boards place a high priority on protecting the health of our students and while we appreciate the intent of this bill, but all of the mandates would place an undue burden on school systems to convert our in house training programs into much broader public education programs. In addition, the requirement that high school students complete a course regarding head injuries prior to participating in physical sports would result in incoming grade 9 students being ineligible for fall sports that are considered physical sports under the bill.

Accordingly, the Board of Education of Anne Arundel County respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on HB1210.