



MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

850 Hungerford Drive ♦ Room 123 ♦ Rockville, Maryland 20850



Bill: House Bill 142
Title: Education - Health and Safety - Emotional Health Awareness Programs
Committee: Ways and Means
Date: February 11, 2016
Position: **OPPOSE**
Contact: Michael Durso, President, Montgomery County Board of Education

The Montgomery County Board of Education opposes House Bill 142.

House Bill 142 would require that school systems utilize outside services and programs to provide a greater level of “emotional health” to “youth coaches” and “youths” participating in high school athletics.

The emotional health of all of our students is a top priority for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). However, we have concerns regarding this legislation. First, “emotional health” is not an issue unique to children/students participating in athletics. Emotional health is an issue of concern for all children and students, whether they participate in athletics or not. In this regard, it begs the question why have athletic participants been the recipient of these services at the exclusion of nonparticipants?

Moreover, regarding “youth sports” coaches, the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) requires Maryland public high schools to hire certified teachers as athletic coaches. In the absence of an available, certified teacher, public schools may hire “certificated coaches” in emergency situations. Certified teachers have had ample training regarding emotional and developmental concepts that affect youths. In fact, Maryland high school coaches are significantly better trained in this area than coaches in most other states that do not require coaches to be teachers. Further, “certificated coaches” are required to take coursework from the National Federation of High School (NFHS) as part of their certification process, including “Fundamentals of Coaching.” Similarly, most school systems in the state, including MCPS, require coaches to take the NFHS course, *Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment*, which addresses the major issues referenced in the proposed legislation.

Fiscally, outside programs can be quite expensive, as much as \$1,000 per school and more. For a school district such as MCPS, which includes 25 high schools and 38 middle schools, the implementation cost can be extensive when coaches already are well-equipped to address issues of emotional health.

For these reasons, we oppose this bill and ask for an unfavorable report.