



**SB759 STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS ELIGIBILITY
WAIVER - GRADUATE ATHLETES**

February 25, 2021

EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

OPPOSE

Jeanette Ortiz, Esq., Legislative & Policy Counsel (410.703.5352)

Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) opposes **SB759 State Department of Education - Interscholastic Athletics Eligibility Waiver - Graduate Athletes**. This bill requires MSDE to waive eligibility requirements for participation in interscholastic athletics in order to allow graduate athletes who graduate from public high school in 2021 to participate in interscholastic athletics for the 2021-2022 school year only. It provides that graduate athletes may participate in an interscholastic athletic program only at the high school from which they graduated and may be enrolled at institution of higher education.

AACPS has several concerns with this legislation as it would have a negative impact on the school system. First, allowing graduates to engage in high school athletics will result in a participation log jam and have the unintended negative consequence on how many underclassmen will be kept on teams to accommodate for roster spots taken by graduates. In addition, this legislation will likely reduce or eliminate the ability for Maryland schools to compete with schools from other states due to eligibility guidelines. This bill also creates a situation where school systems would have no real academic or behavioral guardrails in place for the graduates who would participate. SB759 will also create inequities in participation in high school athletics. Sports teams have roster limitations and allowing graduates to take up roster spots on any high school sports team will take away participation opportunities for existing eligible high school students. AACPS does not believe it acceptable to allow any stipulation that creates an environment that directly or indirectly encourages or pressures schools to prioritize the participation of a graduate over that of a current student.

Finally, this bill will likely result in an unfunded mandate as there may be a cost to the school system for liability insurance for graduates. Further, it is unclear whether obtaining such insurance is even technically or legally feasible.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on SB759.