

The University of Maryland Student Government Association
Testimony for SB439
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, Thursday, Feb. 25, 2021
Jordan McNair Safe and Fair Play Act
POSITION: FAVORABLE

My name is Dan Alpert and I am the Student Body President at the University of Maryland, College Park. I'd like to start by thanking Chair Pinsky and all the members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee for the opportunity to share our thoughts on this vital bill. Thank you to Senators Ready and West for sponsoring this legislation, which will level the playing field for student athletes, bestowing upon them those rights and protections necessary to their unique status, and in many cases already afforded to other students.

During the summer between my freshman and sophomore year, College Park suffered a tragedy in the loss of Jordan McNair, in which multiple preventative measures could have been taken to ensure Jordan would still be alive. Jordan is one of more than thirty college football players who have died during an NCAA-sanctioned workout since 2000. Jordan McNair's preventable death laid bare the vulnerabilities that our student athletes face and the unfair practices that are unique to them.

This bill protects the health, safety, and future of student athletes in three key ways: first, by creating stronger injury protocols; second, by protecting scholarships if there is a break in play, and third, by ensuring that student athletes have all the necessary resources to succeed in their academic and professional lives, both during and after their playing career. The bill packages these in a broader "student athlete bill of rights", a comprehensive list of mandates for schools to keep our student athletes safe.

This bill also follows the lead of more than twenty other states by allowing student athletes to earn an income off the use of their name, image, and likeness. This ensures that student athletes, who dedicate hours of time and put their bodies on the line for the university and for their education, are receiving reasonable and fair benefits as they represent the university.

As a student who has previously worked for our athletics department, I know that many of our student athletes and those who work within the department are not comfortable speaking out on issues that relate to athletics. In fact, when we reached out to student athletes, many were not comfortable with testifying on this bill, proving the importance of the anti-retaliation clause. We need our student athletes to know that not only is their health and financial security being protected, but that their words and actions will not be monitored by the athletics department.

Our goal should always be to make the community a more fair and equitable place. This bill does exactly that, by keeping student athletes safe and allowing them to be appropriately compensated. It is for these reasons that we, the Student Government Association at the University of Maryland, urge you to vote yes on the Jordan McNair Safe and Fair Play Act.

Sincerely,
Dan Alpert, *Student Body President*
Ben Baitman, *Director of Government Affairs*