



HB1185 PUBLIC AND NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS - INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS ELIGIBILITY - RECLASSIFICATION OF STUDENT ATHLETES

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WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

OPPOSE

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) opposes **HB1185 Public and Nonpublic Schools - Interscholastic Athletics Eligibility - Reclassification of Student Athletes**. This bill requires MSDE to allow, and authorizes nonpublic schools to allow, student-athletes who are high school seniors to be reclassified as high school juniors to provide an opportunity for the student-athletes to participate in interscholastic athletics as juniors for the purpose of recruitment by the National Collegiate Athletic Association during the 2021-2022 school year.

While this legislation is well intentioned, AACPS has concerns that it will result in equity issues for AACPS students because it only focuses on athletics. There is no consideration given to students who are juniors and participate in clubs or other extracurricular activities. These students also participate in activities that may also have post-graduate implications as it relates to attending an institution of higher education. However, the bill is silent on these students and this, therefore, creates an equity issue. Other inequities would result in actual participation in high school athletics. More specifically, sports teams have roster limitations and allowing a senior to be treated as junior may impact the roster spots of other student-athletes and participation opportunities for those existing student-athletes. AACPS does not believe it is acceptable to allow any stipulation that creates an environment that directly or indirectly encourages or pressures schools to prioritize the participation of one group of student athletes over other groups of student athletes.

This legislation could also result in a participation log jam and have an unintended negative consequence on how many underclassmen will be kept on teams to accommodate for roster spots taken by the senior athletes. 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. Another unintended consequence from this bill could be impacts on the current Maryland eligibility years related to age of high school athletes and the State requirements related to four seasons of eligibility per sport.

It is also important to note that, in accordance with State law and regulations, whether a high school student is promoted to the next grade or retained in the current grade is based upon the number of academic credits the student has received.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on HB1185.