



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

www.womensdemocraticclub.org

**Senate Bill 0951 – Education – Student Athletes – Uniform Modifications for Modesty
(Inclusive Athletic Attire Act)
Senate Rules Committee – March 15, 2022
SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2022 legislative session. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic Clubs in our County with hundreds of politically active women and men, including many elected officials.

WDC urges the passage of SB0951. This bill will direct boards of education and other governing bodies to allow student athletes to modify an athletic or team uniform to conform to the requirements or preferences of the student athlete's religion or culture. This legislation aligns with Montgomery County¹ and the State Legislature's² recent efforts to strive to achieve racial equity and social justice in policy.

WDC typically justifies legislative proposals based on the percentage of residents impacted. However, racial and religious equity for students is not about demographics, but an issue of human rights. President Joseph Biden stated, "We must...work to ensure that no one feels afraid to attend a religious service, school, or community center, or walk down the street wearing the symbols of their faith... Religious freedom is enshrined in our Constitution's First Amendment as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; it is both a core American value and a human right."³

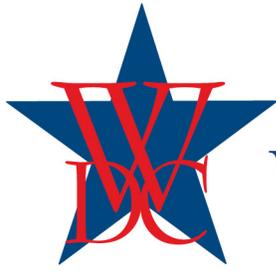
Other states have adopted policies to accommodate student's athletes' uniform choices. "We are trying to create an inclusive environment," said Ms. Crystal Vital-Schwartz and Mr. Jake Henderson of the CHPS [Columbia Height's Public School, Minnesota] Activities Department. "We don't want uniforms to be the reason for someone not to participate." The Illinois legislature passed the *Inclusive Athletic Attire Act*⁴, which would help to assure and provide Muslim student-athletes with more modest uniform options. There is also a trend towards culturally sensitive sports apparel not only by major commercial brands but in organized sports leagues as well. International athletic brands have recently started clothing and equipment lines that are more modest. The NCAA Volleyball teams allow their players to wear leggings instead of shorts

¹ Creating a Racial Equity & Social Justice Policy, Montgomery County Council Legislative Branch, <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/EquityMatters.html>

² Gaskell, Hannah (Feb. 1, 2021). Jones and Ferguson to Require Racial Impact Statements in Bill Analyses, Maryland Matters <https://www.marylandmatters.org/2021/02/01/jones-and-ferguson-to-require-racial-impact-statements-in-bill-analyses/>

³ 2020 Report on International Religious Freedom, Office of International Religious Freedom, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/>

⁴ <https://www.womensrunning.com/culture/news/high-school-uniform-policy-changes/>



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

www.womensdemocraticclub.org

and softball players in Ontario Canada are given long-sleeve undershirts to wear with their typically short-sleeve uniforms.

If even one young athlete is uncomfortable participating on a sports team because the uniform is insensitive to their religious norms, or to their personal comfort or modesty, the school should be prepared to accommodate that student. This bill is an opportunity to push diversity, equity, and inclusion priorities into practice, starting with cultural diversity in our schools.

We ask for your support for SB0951 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.

Respectfully,

Leslie Milano
President