

Ways and Means Committee - HB1122 - UNFAVORABLE

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and the Ways and Means Committee;

Please give HB1122 an Unfavorable Report.

While there are homeschoolers who would like access to public school sports and other public school extracurricular activities, we don't want requirements beyond what's already in COMAR in order to do so.

My issue with this bill is (B)(3) MEETS AND COMPLIES WITH THE PUBLIC SCHOOL'S REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY, which would mean that homeschoolers who want to participate would, according to state requirements¹, have to make sure that out of state travel beyond 300 miles doesn't involve any loss of school time.

According to the requirements of Anne Arundel County Public Schools²:

- The Anne Arundel County Board of Education recognizes for a student to be eligible to participate in interscholastic athletics or extracurricular activities, grades 9 through 12, he/she must maintain a "C" average (a 2.0 grade point average or greater) as determined by existing county grading procedures in the courses taken in a given eligibility period. A student may receive a maximum of one "E" grade in courses taken during that eligibility period. (p.1, section B)
- Student with Disabilities -- Grades 9 through 12 If a student with disabilities receiving special education services fails to meet academic eligibility standards to participate in extracurricular activities, the student and/or his/her parent/guardian may contact the principal of the school and request the convening of an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) Team meeting in order to determine whether or not the student's IEP has been implemented to assist him/her in meeting academic eligibility standards. (p.1, C. 1.)

Home educators are not currently required to track attendance, or determine grades or GPAs.

Homeschooled children also don't receive IEPs. Considering the extremely large number of people who homeschool due to their children's disabilities (including learning disabilities,) and neurodiversity, this would result in discrimination against many, if not all, of those children.

While some homeschooling families are so interested in sports that they might consider providing more than is currently required of homeschoolers, there's the risk of that "more" soon also being required of homeschoolers who don't want to be involved in public school extracurricular activities. To do otherwise would be considerably hard on those who review homeschoolers for COMAR compliance. With over 40,000 home educated children in the state, I can't see how the state homeschool office could do things any other way.

So why didn't I put "Favorable with Amendment"?

Well, because I think that this is just the sort of issue that should be brought up with the MSDE by homeschoolers, rather than in a state legislature. A homeschool advisory council would already know that this bill is seriously problematic, and so wouldn't suggest anything along these lines. They'd work with the MSDE (I don't know if the MSDE was even consulted on this) to try to find a way for homeschoolers to participate in a manner that would also benefit the schools. If the MSDE and

homeschoolers were on the same page, they could move forward - whether that would be with changes to COMAR, or talking to a legislator, or whatever.

I urge you to give HB1122 an Unfavorable Report, even though I think that homeschoolers should have the opportunity to participate in public school extracurricular activities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Debi Jasen
Pasadena, MD

¹https://www.mpssaa.org/assets/1/6/Handbook_2021_Online.pdf p.35 .09C(3)(d)

²<https://aacpsschools.org/boardpolicies/wp-content/uploads/bsk-pdf-manager/2016/08/JJA-Extracurricular-Programs-Academic-Eligibility.pdf>