

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DC Public Schools (DCPS)



Public Oversight Roundtable on
The District of Columbia State Athletic Association
and
The State of School Athletics

Testimony of
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Before the
Committee on Education
Chairman David Grosso

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Room 412
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004



Good morning, Councilmember Grosso and members of the Committee. I am Dwayne Foster, Executive Director of Athletics at DC Public School (DCPS), and I am pleased to testify today about DCPS' latest efforts to create an excellent student athletic experience in all of our schools. We are grateful for the Council's partnership and interest in athletic opportunities for DCPS students.

The District of Columbia Interscholastic Athletic Association (DCIAA) aims to:

- Ensure that interscholastic athletics is a vital, integral part of the total school educational program;
- Emphasize standards of scholarship, sportsmanship, ethical conduct, and amateurism;
- Develop educational leadership, physical fitness, athletic excellence, and sports participation; and,
- Promote equal opportunity to diverse populations interested in participating in athletics programs.

DCPS' Athletics has made significant progress towards our goal of ensuring that all DCPS students have access to comprehensive and inclusive athletic programming. I will use this time to outline several ways we are meeting these goals.

Current State of Athletics at DCPS

As you know, DCPS recognizes the powerful role that athletics can have on a student's education, and therefore provides comprehensive athletics programming to all schools for grades 4 – 12. We regularly collect data on student athlete participation and its relationship with key indicators for student success. As examples, DCPS student athletes outperform their peers on a variety of measures, including in-seat attendance, school satisfaction, and school culture metrics.

I would like to highlight some recent accomplishments of student athletes across DCPS:

- At *Watkins ES*, the Boys Basketball team won the 2019 DCIAA Championship following an undefeated season, and in its inaugural year, the Watkins soccer team remains currently undefeated.
- *Johnson MS* has also excelled in multiple sports. Since the wrestling championship began in 2018, their Wrestling team secured back to back wins. Additionally, the Football team claimed the 2018 championship victory and finished the 2019 season as runner up.
- At the high school level, under the new direction of Athletic Director Dr. Henry Frazier III, the *Dunbar athletics program* has found recent success in Girls Indoor Track, Girls Outdoor Track, and Girls Basketball. The Dunbar Girls' Basketball team won the 2019 DCIAA Girls Basketball Championship after a 2018 runner-up finish.



- DCPS coaches provide student athletes with support and are committed to serving as positive influences for our students. Five Dunbar varsity head coaches have exemplified their dedication and earned DCIAA Coach of the Year.
- DCPS also celebrates the achievements of student athletes as they continue their educational journey. This year, the Wilson Boys' Basketball Team drew national recognition with a team that consisted of three Division I signees—Makhel Mitchell and Makhi Mitchell to University of Maryland, and Jay Heath to Boston College.
 - These students led the Boys Basketball team to an undefeated season, a DCIAA 2019 Championship victory, and the second spot in the Washington Post Final Basketball Poll with a record of 31-9.

Additionally, DCIAA seeks to maximize the student-athlete experience by providing expansive sport offerings, including archery, baseball, basketball, bowling, cheerleading, cross-country, flag football, football, golf, indoor/outdoor track, lacrosse, softball, soccer, stunt, swimming, tennis, volleyball, and wrestling. Across the district, we proudly serve 7,381 student athletes who participate in 909 teams at all 116 campuses. In the last year, we held 2,489 competitions and 61 championships. In football, 13 high schools participated and competed in 85 games that culminated with H.D. Woodson HS winning the Turkey Bowl for the Stars Division and Bell Multicultural HS winning the Gravy Bowl for the Stripes Division in November 2018.

We are also proud of DCPS' progress on female participation; we now provide more opportunities for our young women and girls. DCPS has a dedicated strategy to select program and initiatives designed to ensure proportional participation in sports. Over the last five years, we have seen a 20 percent increase in female participation. These increases are directly correlated with the work that our partners have done to launch archery, lacrosse, and wrestling at the middle school level in School Year 2017-2018. These partners include Winners Lacrosse, Wrestle Like a Girl, Beat the Streets, and the National Archery in Schools Program. We have expanded these sports further in the current school year, to have at least one of these sport options in a school in every ward of the city.

DCPS also emphasizes holistic staff development as a tool to meet our female participation goal. We ensure that schools, coaches, and volunteers are aware of gender-equity best practices and how to prevent and respond to sexual harassment or prejudice through Title IX Training. As a final example, through a partnership with the *Positive Coaching Alliance*, the DCPS Athletics Department has implemented a year-long professional development series that trains coaches and athletic directors on best practices to develop positive character-building experiences for student athletes and teach life lessons through sports. As a result, coaching staff are equipped with the needed skills to create a positive culture within their athletic program that encourages students to strive towards continuous growth.

Recommendations for DCSAA



I want to take the opportunity to share reflections about our partnership with the District of Columbia State Athletic Association (DCSAA), which was created through the “District of Columbia State Athletics Consolidation Act of 2016.” I am pleased to say that we have made great strides with this collaboration and look forward to further strengthen the partnership between the District’s athletic entities.

DCPS appreciates the creation of an Athletic Appeals Panel within the DC State Athletics Commission. This has created more equitable solutions for all DC students. Additionally, we feel the state-level tournaments allows our athletic teams strong and fair competition, which results in quality experiences.

To further strengthen this partnership and the student athlete experience, we would like to offer two recommendations:

- First, we recognize the need for clear and transparent policies that offer strong guidance to all stakeholders. We would urge DCSAA to do more stakeholder engagement and outline a clear process and rationale for all proposed rule changes.
- Second, we recognize that DCSAA and DCIAA are important partners, but also would advocate for maintaining well-defined roles and clear responsibilities. We believe that any state-level athletic functions should preserve LEA athletic autonomy, which allows DCIAA to continue to function efficiently.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. DCPS continues to remain focused on our goals to increase student satisfaction, provide additional outlets for students to express their unique talents and skills, and engage students in school. We recognize that interscholastic athletics is a vital, integral part of the educational experience and strive to promote equal opportunity for all students participating in our athletics program. I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

