

House Committee on Education
Rhode Island General Assembly
Providence, RI 02903

5 May 2025

RE: Support for House Bill 6271

Dear Chairperson and Members of the House Committee on Education,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 6271, which is scheduled for hearing on May 6, 2025, at 3:00 PM. Although I am unable to testify in person, I respectfully request that this letter be entered into the official record in support of the bill.

House Bill 6271 addresses an inequity in Rhode Island's interscholastic athletics policy by allowing middle school students whose schools do not offer a particular sport to participate in that sport at their local public school. This is a fair and reasonable measure that provides access to students who are otherwise arbitrarily excluded—despite being academically qualified and fully willing to comply with existing eligibility standards.

Currently, students in similar situations at the high school level and home-schooled students are permitted to participate in public school athletics. However, middle school students at independent or small schools with limited offerings are provided no such pathway. House Bill 6271 corrects this inconsistency.

The bill creates a narrow, practical exception:

- It applies only when the student's school does not sponsor the sport;
- It requires confirmation from the student's school and approval from the local principal;
- It avoids placing any mandate or burden on public schools to add teams or expand programming.

I believe every student in Rhode Island should have equal access to publicly available extracurricular opportunities, regardless of the size or nature of the school they attend. House Bill 6271 reflects this value and ensures that our policies promote inclusion, not exclusion.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for considering my support of House Bill 6271.

Sincerely,
Katherine Bell
Resident, North Kingstown