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House Education Committee
House Bill 304 – Sponsor Testimony
Tuesday, June 10th, 2025

Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice-Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Education Committee thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 304.

Currently, Ohio provides for a physical education waiver policy which allows high school students to be excused from taking physical education as a graduation requirement per ORC 3313.603. Each student who, during high school, has participated in interscholastic athletics, marching band, show choir, or cheerleading for at least two full seasons or in the junior reserve officer training corps for at least two full school years is able to receive an exemption from taking a physical education class. However, this exemption is not available to students participating in the same athletic activities at the club or individual level.

The current process works as such:

- Local school boards adopt a waiver policy that outlines which interscholastic sports and/or activities qualify.
- Schools approve student applications for the waiver.
- Students must fulfill *two seasons* of interscholastic sport or activity as outlined in the district's waiver policy. Students can participate in different activities in different seasons.

The interscholastic team must:

- Represent the school (all participants must also be from the school rather than from any school within the district).
- Be organized and supervised by the school (e.g., the coach is hired by the school, the school runs the team, all school athletic policies and consequences apply, etc.).
- Be fully funded by the school (the school has financial responsibility for the team, pays for the coach, cost of transportation, etc.).
- Compete against other school-based teams throughout a full season.¹

¹ <https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Physical-Education/Physical-Education-Waiver-Requirements#:~:text=The%20board%20of%20education%20of,band%2C%20show%20choir%20or%20cheerleadin>
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Students who are unable to take advantage of this waiver are required to take one-half unit of physical education which means a minimum of one hundred twenty hours of course instruction.

While this waiver is well intentioned and helpful for students who are active in school sponsored sports and teams, it alienates students who are just as active and playing the same sports but, on a club, or travel team. For example, a student tries out for the high school basketball team but does not make it. So instead, they join a club or travel team and play the same sport. This student would be required to take a physical education class while any of the students on the school team do not. This disparity was brought to me by students from my district who were searching to have this policy amended to fix this situation.

In our legislation "Club Sports" includes both of the following:

1. a) A sport sanctioned by a school, but not regulated by an organization that regulates interscholastic conferences or events and is limited to participants under nineteen years of age.
2. (b) A youth sports organization as defined in section 2707.51 of the Revised Code.

"Other athletic activity" means a sport or physical activity taught by an instructor outside of school.

Those participating in club sports or other athletic activities are still required to participate in these outside athletics for at least 120 hours, or roughly two seasons. Additionally, any student who participates in a club sport or other athletic activity shall submit a signed statement attesting that the student has met the requirements under that division to the school district board of education or the chartered nonpublic school governing authority of the school in which the student is enrolled. The statement shall include signatures from the coach of the club sport or instructor of the athletic activity and the student's parent or guardian.

One addition to this legislation, following feedback from the last General Assembly in this committee, is the new requirement of 30 minutes of recess in both the morning and afternoon for students in grades K-8. These students are not subject to the physical education waiver, but getting exercise and a chance to be active is vitally important. In order to live healthy and active lives, they need time throughout the day to be kids and run around, play with classmates, and release energy. Giving them an hour during the day provides this outlet.

By making these changes we are hoping to make meaningful adjustments to this existing policy and allow for students who are committed to club/travel athletic teams and sports to be a part of this waiver process. Thank you for your time and we would be happy to answer any questions.