



Highlands School District

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Dr. Joseph Latess, Superintendent

Patrick M. Graczyk, Assistant to the Superintendent

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Re: HB 209

As School Board of Directors and Superintendent of the Highlands School District, we believe in the equal opportunity for all student-athletes as defined in Federal law and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

The Highlands School District ensures female students have the right to participate equally in sports and to be treated equally in athletic programs compared with their male classmates. Even in these difficult economic times, the Highlands School District has committed to maintaining opportunities for female student-athletes to play high school sports with the appropriate equipment, uniforms, fields, facilities, coaching, publicity, scheduling, and transportation that is afforded to our male student-athletes.

After reviewing HB 209, much of the information requested is simply defined in the By-laws and basic operations of the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA). Team expenditures, number of coaches, and compensation for athletic department personnel are all details of a school district's public budget.

But the area of the bill most concerning is the requirement to *"provide the total value of contributions and purchases made on behalf of each team by booster clubs, alumni, and any other non school source"*. This statement will require school districts to enter into the control of booster organizations that are solely comprised of parents and community members who raise funds for athletic teams, funds that cannot be made available through the school district under current budget constraints.

Not all booster organizations have a common ability to raise funds, and by their very nature, do not provide assistance to athletic programs in this school district on an equal basis; however, this is not due to an athlete's gender. When school districts begin to enter into the oversight of booster organizations, booster organizations tend to misinterpret their role and relationship, leading to pressure from booster groups to want involvement in the hiring or firing of coaches, scheduling of contests, rostering of players, and playing time decisions, which are all essential functions of the school district athletic department and **not** a function of any booster organization.

Although we believe that parents and students have a right to know whether their high school is treating female athletes fairly, they can access this information through the Right to Know Law and procedures already established in the Commonwealth.

State and federal agencies place many mandates on local school districts through regulations and laws without providing the financial resources to pay for the costs of that implementation. As school districts struggle to formulate budgets that meet the needs of all students in a fiscally responsible manner, the state and federal governments continue to require the dedication of local funds to address their directives. To address all the mandates outlined in the proposed HB 209, we believe the

Highlands School District would require additional athletic department staff to manage, produce, and report the data. At a time of program cuts, teacher furloughs, and rising benefit costs, now is **not** the time to enter into a mandate that will place financial strain on an already arduous financial situation for our school district.

On behalf of the Highlands School District, we urge you to oppose HB 209 and the **unfunded** mandate that this Bill will establish for school districts.

Mrs. Debbie Beale
Highlands School District Board President

Dr. Joseph Latess
Highlands School District Superintendent