



BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL EDUCATION, YOUTH, & OLDER ADULT COMMITTEE

Mission Statement

*On behalf of the Citizens of Baltimore City, the mission of the **Education, Youth, and Older Adults (EYOA) Committee** is to study, review, and recommend policies that enhance educational opportunities, support the well-being and development of young people, and improve the quality of life for older adults. The committee is committed to fostering equitable access to high-quality education, advocating for youth empowerment, and ensuring that aging residents have the resources and services necessary to thrive.*

The Honorable John Bullock

CHAIR

PUBLIC HEARING

November 13, 2025

12:30 PM

CLARENCE "DU" BURNS COUNCIL CHAMBERS

Bill: 25-0031R

***Title: Informational Hearing – Middle School
Sports***

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Meeting: Resolution Hearing

Committee: Education, Youth, & Older Adults

Bill # 25-0031R

Title: Informational Hearing – Middle School Sports

Purpose: For the purpose of inviting representatives from Mayor Brandon M. Scott's administration, the Baltimore City Public School System, the Department of Recreation and Parks, and the Baltimore Children and Youth Fund to appear before the City Council to: (1) provide an update on current sports programs for middle school-aged children and identify which programs are being administered by City agencies, schools, and contractors; (2) present a recap of middle school sports program availability in the previous 3 years and a projection for opportunities in the next 3 years; (3) identify opportunities for stakeholders to collaborate and increase the number of programs available in the future; and (4) better define the roles these City agencies hold in middle school sports and identify further ways they can engage middle school-aged children in sports programs and opportunities.

REPORTING AGENCIES

Agency	Report
Baltimore City Public School System	PowerPoint
Department of Recreation and Parks	Not Received

BACKGROUND

Access to organized sports for middle school-aged youth varies widely across the United States, with significant differences by income, geography, and race. Research indicates that intramural programs, which emphasize participation and physical activity over competition, tend to have higher inclusion rates among low-income and Black students than interscholastic programs.

Nationally, participation in organized sports has declined in recent years, with approximately 34.6% of high school students participating in 2022–2023. Studies also highlight persistent disparities in access. For example, a 2025 report from Under Armor found that 70% of boys

participated in organized sports compared to 53% of girls, and 84% of White youth participated compared to 51% of Black youth.

Cities across the country have responded to these disparities with efforts to expand middle school sports programming. In New York City, the Public Schools Athletic League provides extensive opportunities for high school students but fewer options for middle schoolers, prompting nonprofit organizations to fill programming gaps. In Connecticut, program access varies substantially by community wealth, with more opportunities available in affluent areas than in urban centers. In Baltimore, the share of middle school students meeting recommended physical activity levels declined from 43% in 2016 to 30% in 2021. In response, Baltimore City Public Schools launched a citywide middle school sports initiative in 2023–2024, the first effort to provide all 80 middle schools with access to organized sports programs.

Bill Summary

Bill 25-0031R invited representatives from the Mayor's Office, Baltimore City Public School System, Department of Recreation and Parks, and the Baltimore Children and Youth Fund to provide an update on current sports programs for middle school-aged children, present a recap of program availability over the past three years, and identify opportunities for stakeholders to collaborate and expand access in the future. The resolution was introduced to examine the status of middle school sports programs in Baltimore City and assess coordination among agencies involved in youth recreation.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Fiscal Note:

Bill 25-0031R is a resolution requesting information and updates from relevant city agencies and does not authorize new spending. Therefore, it has no direct fiscal impact. However, any future initiatives, collaborations, or program expansions identified through the hearing could have fiscal implications.

Information Source(s): 25-0031R 1st reader.

Kanters, M. A., Bocarro, J. N., Edwards, M. B., & Casper, J. M. (2019). School sport participation under two school sport policies: Comparison of intramural and interscholastic sport participation rates and implications for promoting physical activity. *Annals of Behavioral*

Medicine, 45(Suppl 1), S113–S121. https://academic.oup.com/abm/article-abstract/45/suppl_1/S113/4563909

LendingTree. (2023). Youth sports participation study: Which states have the most (and least) kids playing sports? <https://www.lendingtree.com/debt-consolidation/youth-sports-study/>

Under Armour. (2025). Significant disparities in sports engagement found among Washington, D.C. youth. <https://about.underarmour.com/en-us/stories/2025/03/significant-disparities-in-sports-engagement-found-among-washing.html>

Zimmerman, A. (2022, January 20). New York City has no official middle school sports league. These parents want to change that. Chalkbeat New York.

<https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2022/1/20/22893411/nyc-middle-school-sports-league-competitive-play/>

Mahoney, L. (2023, March 31). Connecticut's youth sports inequality: Who can afford to play? CT Insider. <https://www.ctinsider.com/sports/article/connecticut-youth-sports-inequality-17924808.php>

Project Play. (2024, April 9). How Baltimore is improving sports access for children. Aspen Institute. <https://projectplay.org/news/2024/4/9/how-baltimore-is-improving-sports-access-for-children>

Analysis by: Juliane Jemmott

Analysis Date: 11/6/2025

Direct Inquiries to: (410) 396 - 1268

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 25-0031R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmember Blanchard

Cosponsored by: Councilmembers Middleton, Gray, Jones, and Ramos

Introduced and read first time: August 18, 2025

Assigned to: Education, Youth, and Older Adults Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Baltimore City Public School System, Department of Recreation and Parks

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

Informational Hearing – Middle School Sports

3 FOR the purpose of inviting representatives from Mayor Brandon M. Scott's administration, the
4 Baltimore City Public School System, the Department of Recreation and Parks, and the
5 Baltimore Children and Youth Fund to appear before the City Council to: (1) provide an
6 update on current sports programs for middle school-aged children and identify which
7 programs are being administered by City agencies, schools, and contractors; (2) present a
8 recap of middle school sports program availability in the previous 3 years and a projection for
9 opportunities in the next 3 years; (3) identify opportunities for stakeholders to collaborate and
10 increase the number of programs available in the future; and (4) better define the roles these
11 City agencies hold in middle school sports and identify further ways they can engage middle
12 school-aged children in sports programs and opportunities.

Recitals

14 Youth sports are a unique avenue for children to improve their mental, physical, and
15 emotional health, as well as improve their academic performance and social skills. Regular
16 physical activity through sports programs contributes to a healthier community and provides a
17 wide array of non-physical benefits as well.

18 In the 2017 study “School Sports Participation and Academic Achievement in Middle and
19 High School”, researchers found that school sports participation was significantly associated with
20 academic achievement, positive body-image perceptions, and self-esteem. Participation in
21 schools sports additionally demonstrated a significant standardized effect on academic
22 achievement.

23 Baltimore’s middle school-aged students stand to gain significantly from access to sports
24 programs and opportunities. These experiences can help contribute to their overall personal
25 development and growth and lay the foundation for a brighter and more prosperous future.

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS indicate matter added to existing law.
[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Council Bill 25-0031R

1 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the City
2 Council invites representatives from Mayor Brandon M. Scott's Administration, the Baltimore
3 City Public School System, the Department of Recreation and Parks, and the Baltimore Children
4 and Youth Fund to appear before the City Council to: (1) provide an update on current sports
5 programs for middle school-aged children and identify which programs are being administered
6 by City agencies, schools, and contractors; (2) present a recap of middle school sports program
7 availability in the previous 3 years and a projection for opportunities in the next 3 years; (3)
8 identify opportunities for stakeholders to collaborate and increase the number of programs
9 available in the future; and (4) better define the roles these City agencies hold in middle school
10 sports and identify further ways they can engage middle school-aged children in sports programs
11 and opportunities.

12 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
13 CEO and Board of Commissioners of the Baltimore City Public School System, the Director of
14 the Department of Recreation and Parks, the President of the Baltimore Children and Youth
15 Fund, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

Baltimore City Council



Education, Youth, & Older Adults

Committee

Bill: 25-0031R

**Title: Informational Hearing – Middle
School Sports**

Agency Reports

Transforming Middle School Athletics: A Journey of Growth

*Informational Hearing – Middle School Sports
Council Bill 25-0031R*

November 13, 2025

Tiffany Byrd, Director of Athletics





City Schools Middle School Athletics: Our Story

The State of Middle School Athletics Before COVID-19

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, City Schools' middle school athletics were severely limited, with programming mainly available in basketball and track & field at only a small number of schools. Resource constraints, including insufficient funding, inadequate facilities, and transportation barriers, resulted in inequitable access to sports opportunities, leaving many students without the benefits of structured athletic experiences that promote physical health and teamwork.





Overview

In partnership with Under Armour, City Schools completed a comprehensive landscape analysis that helped develop and inform the Middle School Athletics Exposure and Expansion Initiative.

Analysis Insights

- Compared to other MD counties, there were fewer middle school athletics opportunities available in Baltimore City.
- Surrounding districts largely relied on recreation departments.
- City Schools is leading with a district-based model.

Why It Matters

- Students participating in organized athletics report higher levels of school engagement and improved attendance.
- Principals strongly support centralized athletic programming to create consistency and opportunity.

The District's Commitment: A Strategic Response



City Schools
Committed to
Increase
Opportunities



Framework of
Additional Staffing
& Resources



Expansion to 7
Competitive Sports
Offerings



RFP Developed to
Engage Vendors &
Partners



City Schools Adjust
to Facilitate Vendor
Programming



16 Vendors &
Partners Provide
MS Athletics &
Leadership
Programs

City Schools Middle School Athletics Opportunities

Cross Country

Unified Flag Football

Volleyball

Unified Indoor Bocce

Basketball

district coordinated
vendor coordinated

Unified Track & Field

Unified Outdoor Bocce

Badminton

Boxing

Crew/Rowing

Golf

Kickball

Lacrosse

Tennis

Pickleball

Soccer

Squash

Swimming

Running

Flag Rugby

Ultimate Frisbee

Baseball

Softball

Rowing

Mentorship Through Sport





Coppin State University



BUBA



First Tee Golf



Girls On The Run



The Little Leagues



National Coalition of Womens Athletics



Soccer Without Borders



Squashwise



Y in Central Maryland



Whole Person Whole Life



Girls in the Game



GameOn Fitness



Harlem Lacrosse

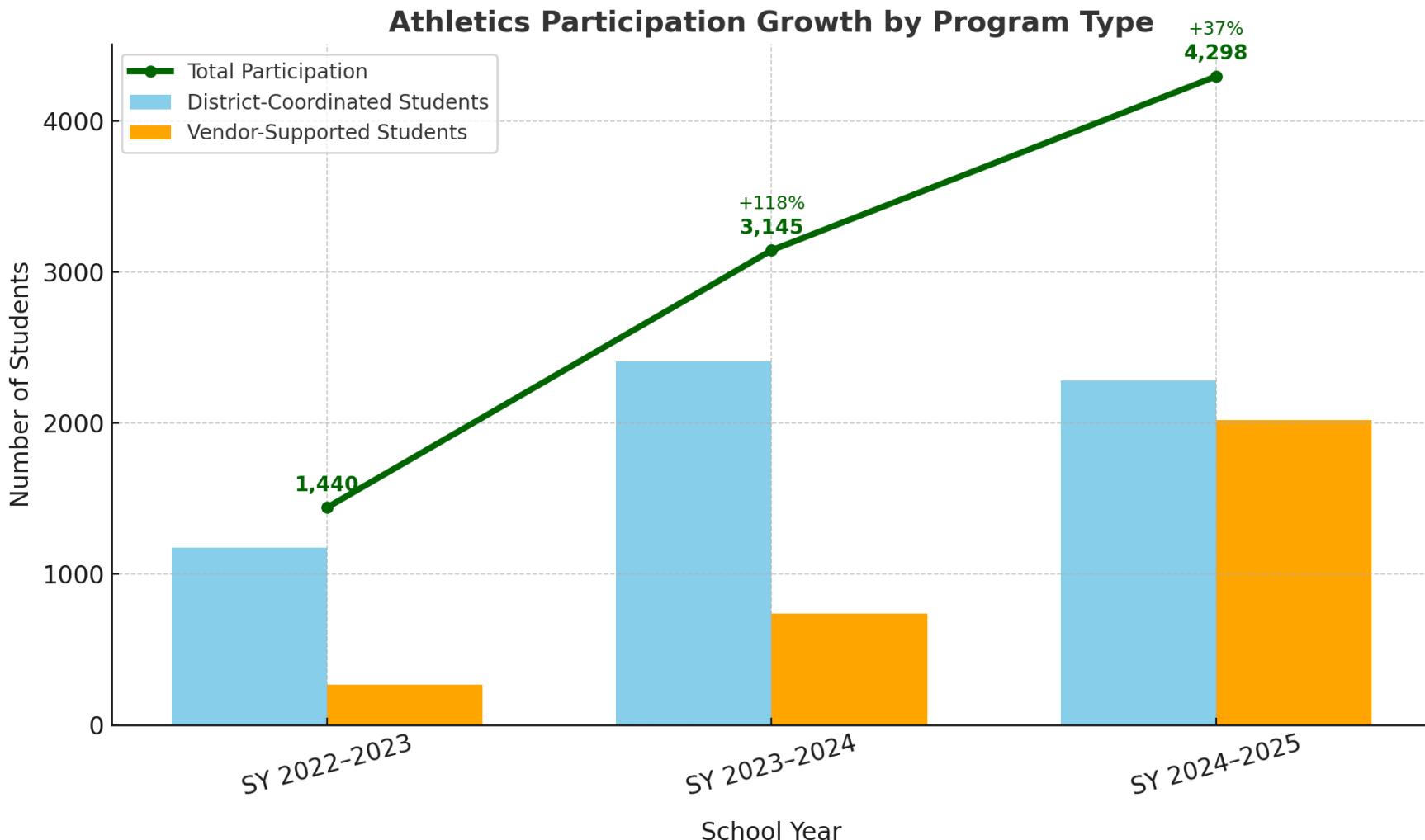
Vendor Partnerships & Support

While program growth has been extraordinary, it's important to note that this success reflects **significant financial and operational investments**. Expansion has relied on **collaboration, strategic use of resources, and the shared commitment** of educators and community partners who believe in the power of athletics to enrich students' experiences and outcomes.



Milestones in Motion

Over the past three school years, City Schools' Middle School Athletics programming has experienced remarkable expansion and revitalization.



From SY22-23 to SY24-25



+92%

teams



+198%

student athletes

Our Shared Path Forward

City Schools' middle school athletics program has evolved into a **thriving, districtwide initiative** supported by schools, coaches, and community partners.

Substantial expansion of opportunities is giving more middle schoolers access to sports and team experiences than ever before.

By providing early **exposure to sports**, we're building a **strong pipeline into high school athletics**.

Our new **partnership with the Baltimore Children and Youth Fund** (BCYF)—including a **\$300,000 investment**—will further expand reach, with BCYF managing the spring vendor-provided programming.

Continued investment and collaboration will **secure the long-term future** of middle school athletics, ensuring every student can experience the benefits of sport, teamwork, and belonging.



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