



VA PTA Statement
House Education – Subcommittee Meeting
Thursday January 26, 2012 7:30 a.m.
Anne Carson, President, VA PTA

Opposition to HB 905, 947, 1005

For the past few sessions, the Virginia Parent Teacher Association has spoken in opposition of some version of this bill. Our more than 300,000 members voted in 2010 that participation in interscholastic activities is a privilege that should be reserved for public school students. Public school students who have to meet 13 unique eligibility requirements. Public school students whose parents have chosen public school because of the privileges that accompany that choice.

Our parents want you to know that when they choose the school environment for their children, they do it thoughtfully and methodically.

They assess the size of the school, the availability of elective clubs and often, the strength of the athletic program. Then they weigh the pros and cons and when they do commit to the school environment of their choice, they understand there are certain opportunities they are guaranteed, certain ones their student won't get, and most importantly, opportunities their children will have to earn.

Participation in interscholastic programs - including debate, scholastic bowl, theater and, of course, athletics, is a privilege that public school students have to earn.

Sometimes, their spot on the basketball team is what keeps them attending school - following the rules and studying to pass their SOL's.

Sometimes, their spot on the soccer squad is what is going to get them into college.

Sometimes, debate team, being part of a team, is what eases their way through the tumultuous teen years.

But always, it is a privilege of attending public schools.

You have undoubtedly heard a lot about leveling the playing field but I would like to tell you what our parents are saying. They are saying that a level playing field means all

the athletes go to school the same amount of time, practice the same amount of time, follow the same rules, meet the same requirements. Competing against students in alternative learning environments who may have hours and hours during which they can practice, rehearse and drill, isn't a level playing field in their mind.

Our parents take these bills seriously. They believe in the privilege of interscholastic programs for public school students. They believe in our public schools. They commit to enforcing their rules. They expect the state to do the same.