Maryland PTA represents nearly 200,000 members in over 970 public schools, with the mission of advocating on behalf of children and youth in the schools, in the community, and before governmental bodies and other organizations that make decisions affecting children. Maryland PTA is comprised of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business and community leaders devoted to the educational success of children in Maryland. As the state’s oldest and largest child advocacy organization, PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools, communities and a strong advocate for public education.

Maryland PTA submits this testimony in support of HB 14 on Part Time School Employees and Coaches. Parents believe that schools should provide safe and nurturing environment for all students and most schools do so. HB 14 would serve to maintain a safe environment for students by requiring that all part time employees and coaches submit to background checks and fingerprint requirements if they come in contact with students in Maryland. It is our understanding that several school communities in Maryland already have this requirement, and that volunteers pay for their own fingerprint fees. However, the fingerprint requirement, which would automatically indicate any criminal history, is not a requirement across the board. Some counties simply ask volunteers to self-certify that they have never been convicted of a crime.

Maryland PTA supports programs that foster a safe and supportive school climate. An initiative, such as HB14, would keep children safe while supporting the mission of PTA to maintain a safe and nurturing learning environment. One of the Purposes of PTA is “to secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth”, for that reason Maryland PTA supports the passage of HB 14 because we believe that asking volunteers to undergo background checks is a step in the right direction.

For the reasons stated, Maryland PTA encourages your support of HB 14.

Testimony submitted on behalf of

Rita Lowman
President
Maryland Parent Teacher Association
president@mdpta.org

January 22, 2013