



## LOWER HUDSON EDUCATION COALITION

450 Mamaroneck Ave, Harrison, NY 10528 • (914) 345-8737 • [www.lhec.org](http://www.lhec.org) • [lhec@lhec.org](mailto:lhec@lhec.org)

### MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

A.10814 (Sayegh / Slater)

The Lower Hudson Education Coalition (LHEC) **strongly supports A.10814**, introduced by Assemblymember Nader Sayegh and co-sponsored by Assemblymember Matt Slater, which would direct the Commissioner of Education to require the New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA), the Public Schools Athletic League (PSAL), and other interscholastic athletic associations to conduct separate state championship tournaments for public and non-public schools. This bill represents a long-overdue correction to a structural inequity that has steadily eroded the integrity of New York's state championship system and the experience of tens of thousands of public school student-athletes who play by a fundamentally different set of rules than the schools they are asked to compete against in the postseason.

Public and non-public schools in New York operate under entirely different enrollment frameworks, and that difference is decisive on the playing field. Public school districts are bound by geography: they enroll the children who live within their boundaries, full stop. A public school football coach in Yonkers, Ossining, or New Rochelle fields a team built from the students who happen to live in that community. A public school basketball program in Mount Vernon or Spring Valley does not get to choose its roster from across the region, the state, or the country.

Non-public schools operate under no such constraint. They are free to recruit student-athletes from anywhere—across district lines, across county lines, and in many cases across state and national borders—and to offer scholarships, financial aid packages, and other inducements to attract the most talented players in a given sport. The result is not a level playing field tilted slightly in one direction; it is two entirely different competitive ecosystems being forced into the same bracket every March and June. The data bear this out year after year: non-public schools, which represent a small fraction of NYSPHSAA membership, win a wildly disproportionate share of state championships in the highest-profile sports.

Few regions of the state feel this imbalance more acutely than the Lower Hudson Valley. Section 1 districts—which include some of the largest and most athletically competitive public school programs in New York—regularly send teams deep into state tournaments only to meet rosters that have been assembled through recruitment rather than residency. Talented public school student-athletes in our region routinely complete undefeated regular seasons and section championships only to have their state title hopes ended by programs that were built under entirely different rules.

It is important to be precise about what this bill does and does not do. A.10814 **does not** prohibit public and non-public schools from competing against one another. It **does not** eliminate regular-season scheduling, scrimmages, holiday tournaments, or invitationals. Public school programs in the Lower Hudson Valley will continue to face top non-public competition throughout the year, and the educational and competitive value of those matchups will be fully preserved.

What the bill **does** do is restore meaning to the words “state champion” for public school student-athletes by ensuring that the postseason tournament leading to that title is contested among schools that operate under the same enrollment rules. It directs NYSPHSAA, PSAL, and other associations to conduct separate public and non-public state championships—an approach already used, in various forms, by neighboring states whose athletic associations have grappled with the same imbalance and reached the same conclusion.

Interscholastic athletics are not a side activity in our public schools—they are a central piece of the educational mission. Sports teach discipline, teamwork, resilience, and the value of representing one’s community. For a child growing up in a Lower Hudson Valley public school district, putting on the jersey of the local high school is a connection to neighbors, classmates, parents, alumni, and a community identity that stretches back generations. The reward for years of work in that program should be a fair and meaningful path to a state championship—not a bracket that has been mathematically tilted against them since the day the season began.

A.10814 honors that promise. It tells the public school student-athlete in Peekskill, Nyack, White Plains, Port Chester, or Newburgh that their work matters, that their championship is real, and that the trophy at the end of the season was earned on a level field against schools that play by the same rules they do.

For the aforementioned reasons, the Lower Hudson Education Coalition **strongly supports A.10814** and respectfully urges the Assembly Committee on Education to advance this bill.