DISTRICT LETTERHEAD

DATE

The Honorable Ben Allen

Chair, Senate Education Committee

California State Capitol, Room 2083

Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 1435 (Gonzalez Fletcher) – The Athlete Protection Act**

Position**: OPPOSE UNLESS AMENDED**

Dear Senator Allen,

On behalf of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Community College District, I write to respectfully express our **OPPOSE UNLESSS AMENDED position to AB 1435 (Gonzalez Fletcher),** legislation that could significantly reduce the ability of community colleges to offer athletic programs. We fear that the scope and power of the panel created by the bill will force community colleges to choose between spending badly needed resources to comply with state mandates or providing more opportunities for students to participate in collegiate athletics.

Community college athletic programs are student success programs. Our student athletes are required to attend college full time and complete 24 units by their second season of competition, thus our student-athletes have a higher rate of success and graduate earlier than our average student. If our district was forced to eliminate athletic programs, we would be forced to remove an important tool in achieving state goals of better student outcomes and completion rates.

Our college athletic programs have designed policies and procedures to ensure that the academics and health of our students are their first priority. Specifically, they:

* Require student-athletes to be enrolled full time.
* Created strict concussion and return to play protocols for injured student athletes.
* The majority of our coaches are either full time or tenured professors. Thus coaching is not their full time job, they must meet minimum academic qualifications and cannot be fired for a losing season.
* By state law our colleges are not permitted to provide athletic scholarships or monetary support in any way to our student-athletes.
* Have put strict limitations on how colleges can recruit student-athletes outside of their area, thus keeping programs less competitive and more focused on their community.
* Our colleges do not participate in high stakes bowl or playoff games.

A panel with significant oversight and regulatory powers that treated all athletic programs the same would put our institutions ability to offer collegiate athletics at risk. The panel would develop policy guidelines and mandates around medical return to play, retention of medical records, and student-athlete study time, among other areas.

We are concerned that this panel would create a one-size-fits-all approach regarding collegiate athletics, without taking into account the significant differences among institutions. For example, regulations meant to address perceived problems at high profile Division I football programs may be difficult or impossible to implement at our institutions.

We understand and sympathize with the author regarding the protection of our student-athletes. If the health and academics of student-athletes were being put at risk in a systematic way by collegiate athletic programs, it would be important for the state to take action. Therefore, we support amendments that would remove the regulatory power of the proposed panel and give it a mandate to examine current practices regarding student-athletes and report its findings. This way the state would have information to act upon in future legislation or initiatives.

For these reasons, we have adopted an opposed unless amended position for AB 1435 (Gonzalez Fletcher). Thank you for your consideration of our position. Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,





NAME

CC: Assemblymember Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher

Members, Senate Education Committee

Community College League of California