

Submitter: Christine Pechette
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure: HB3006

I offer testimony with the goal to request an exemption for competitive youth rowers - following the federal Coast Guard regulations that provide exemption from wearing a PFD while rowing.

As a parent of a teenager, my primary purpose is to keep my child safe. Youth rowers and their teams have many safety measures in place - including being trailed by launch boats equipped with flotation devices and under the constant observation of coaches, they are conditioned athletes who are required to pass a float test prior to participating. Rowing practices and races are closely supervised. The safety record for youth rowing programs nationwide is excellent. I believe that the exception offered by the Coast Guard should be followed at the state level.

Requiring rowers to wear a pdf will potentially put them at greater risk than they are at without one on.

- The rowing motion involves moving parts, not least of which is an oar, which is repeatedly brought in close proximity to the torso. In the event of a capsized, it is likely that a pdf (standard or inflatable) will complicate a rower's extraction from the boat, as it will almost certainly get tangled with the oar or caught under a boat rigger. Rowing shells are designed with features that allow an athlete to free themselves of the boat as easily as possible in the event of capsized, so they don't get trapped underneath an overturned shell.
- Rowers are trained and practice what to do in the event of a capsized. They must pass rigorous float tests to be allowed on the boats.
- Standard life jackets are bulky enough to prohibit the rowing motion. Mandating that rowers wear them will effectively prohibit them from performing the rowing motion correctly.

It is for these reasons that rowers are exempted nationwide from wearing PFDs while rowing, according to federal Coast Guard regulations.

While I applaud any initiatives to increase water safety, I believe that mandating that rowers wear PFD's will actually create a more dangerous environment for our kids.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kindly,
Christine, Mom