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**JOINT RESOLUTION TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT
APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR AT SPORTING EVENTS
AND TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF SCHOOL ATHLETIC
CONTEST OFFICIALS, PLAYERS, COACHES AND FANS**

WHEREAS, participation in sports events is a popular part of American life and is of interest to all age levels and all segments of society, including our schools. Participation in sports helps keep people healthy and is important in developing good social skills and in learning about cooperation and teamwork; and

WHEREAS, sports in general consist of a partnership between the players, the coaches and fans, and sports have evolved over the years with established rules and certain traditions to ensure continuity, safety and fairness; and

WHEREAS, sports have strong ties to our schools and colleges, and school athletic officials, such as referees, umpires, judges, timekeepers, coaches, instructors and administrators, are in one sense the most important component in school athletics and are essential to continued success, by ensuring accuracy and fairness; and

WHEREAS, many school athletic officials volunteer their time or receive only minimal compensation, participating out of the love for the sport and the desire to teach student athletes the valuable lessons that are learned through sports participation, such as sportsmanship, working as a team and following rules of the game to achieve a common goal; and

WHEREAS, school athletic officials act as neutral judges without a stake in the games and should never be at risk of assault or abuse by participants in the game or fans or family of competing teams; and

WHEREAS, student athletes and fans are exposed to constant media coverage of professional sports athletes who sometimes act out in inappropriate ways and the student athletes may sometimes feel compelled to emulate their professional sports heroes; and

WHEREAS, increasingly, school athletic officials in America are subjected to verbal and sometimes physical assault and abuse by disgruntled fans, family members and participants of the game; and

WHEREAS, we wish to take action to stop these assaults before a school athletic official is seriously injured and we urge local authorities, law enforcement, prosecutors and judges to consider applicable penalties to help ensure that all parties at sporting events realize that such behavior is unacceptable at all times; and

WHEREAS, the school athletic officials who give their time and energy to officiate and supervise games deserve our collective respect and they must have complete confidence that they will be able to carry out their responsibilities in a safe environment; and

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WHEREAS, sports need to be a positive part of life that highlights positive accomplishments and educates in the rules of sportsmanship and fair play; now, therefore, be it

That We, the Members of the One Hundred and Twenty-third Legislature now assembled in the First Regular Session, on behalf of the people we represent, take this opportunity to express our unequivocal support for the good people who take their time to officiate, coach and supervise our school athletics and we urge all law enforcement agencies to prosecute to the fullest extent of the law when the line is crossed in an illegal manner during a sporting event.