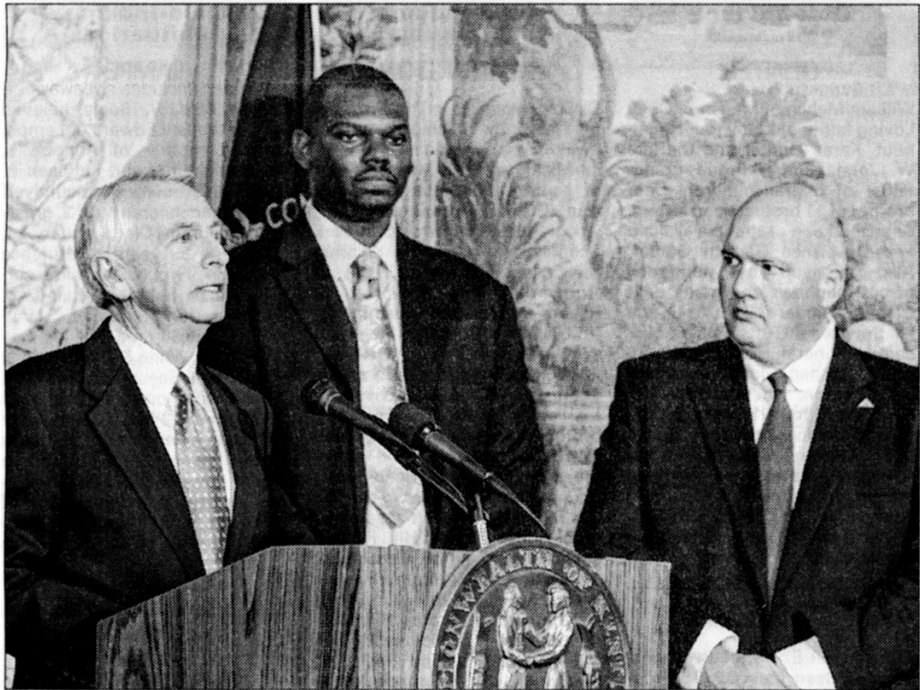


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Provided/Marvin Young

Jamal Mashburn appears with Gov. Steve Beshear (left) and Rep. Jeff Greer (right) in Frankfort on Wednesday to support a bill intended to keep teens in school.

Ex-UK player endorses bill to raise dropout age

The Associated Press

FRANKFORT – Former University of Kentucky basketball star Jamal Mashburn called Wednesday for state lawmakers to approve a proposal that would gradually raise the minimum dropout age from 16 to 18.

Mashburn, who also played 13 years in the NBA, appeared at a Capitol news conference where he endorsed legislation being championed by Kentucky first lady Jane Beshear.

The legislation under consideration in Kentucky, where 6,000 students dropped out in 2009, would increase the mini-

mum age for legally quitting school to 17 in 2015 and to 18 in 2016.

"I know how hard it is for young people who don't complete their high school education," said Mashburn, who talked about struggling academically in his early high school years. "And I want to do everything I can to help kids realize they need to stay in school."

Gov. Steve Beshear said the legislation, which failed last year, is an important economic initiative.

"Encouraging our high school students to stay in school is not only an educa-

tion issue, it's a work force issue," he said. "A better-educated work force means better quality jobs."

The governor said studies show that high school dropouts earn an average of \$6,800 per year less than graduates and that they are more likely to be unemployed or engaged in crime.

Jane Beshear, a former teacher, said raising the dropout age is a matter of common sense.

"Letting children drop out at age 16 is a relic of another time, when young people could find work without a high school diploma," she said.