

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB630
Public High Schools- Financial Literacy Pilot Program
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Greetings, Members of the Maryland Ways and Means Committee. My name is Allison Sweeney, and I'm a sophomore at Poolesville High School. I'm speaking to you today as a lifelong Maryland public school student and the Co-National Advocacy Director of InnovateX, a youth-led initiative to expand personal financial education nationwide.

Financial literacy is a core skill to succeed in the 21st century, one that students begin to exercise as soon as they get their first part-time job or fill out their FAFSA application. Many of my senior friends I've spoken with have expressed that they have to navigate applying for financial aid without their parents, even though they manage their child's finances. According to Forbes, Student loan debt in 2021 has amassed an astonishing \$1.7 trillion, leaving frightening prospects for graduating seniors.

One of Innovate X's initiatives, Project Finance, surveyed over 1,300 students across 18 high schools in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), the largest school district in the state of Maryland, and found that 86.2% of students favor expanding personal finance curriculum to all high schools. Statistics in my district are mirrored across the state, and socioeconomic barriers are most evident. Given Maryland's strong educational reputation, it should provide its continually growing student body with the necessary knowledge to apply filing taxes, taking out loans, and much more to their post-public-education lives. The enthusiasm and near-universal approval by students, parents, and teachers on any given issue are unparalleled to anything I have ever observed in my time as a staunch advocate for educational equity.

For these reasons, I ask for a FAVORABLE REPORT on HB630. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Allison Sweeney