



**Testimony in SUPPORT of  
House Bill 456: County Boards of Education – Student Members – Voting Rights and  
Participation in Executive Sessions**

**Ways and Means Committee**

**Position: Favorable**

February 7, 2024

At Strong Schools Maryland, we envision a Maryland that leads the nation in achieving equitable student outcomes through empowered stakeholder engagement – meaningfully engaging students in the decision-making process that will impact their education and future is a must. **Strong Schools Maryland stands in support of House Bill 456**, which will codify the right to vote on important issues, for student members of county boards of education.

Advocating for children’s education around Maryland means not only advocating for the needs of students, but also empowering them to be their own advocates and decision-makers. Our current education governance structure fails to codify certain voting rights of student members of county boards – resulting in some counties not granting voting rights or having limited voting rights for their student board member. These students bring unique insights, firsthand experiences, and well researched propositions, yet they are currently being excluded from the decision making process that impacts their first hand experience within the education system and their futures.

Simply put, HB 456 will lead to a more engaged and empowered student body. Research from the Center for American Progress supports that inclusion of student voice in the decision making process can increase student motivation and better school climate<sup>1</sup>. Codifying the rights of the student member of all local boards of education to vote on important issues will not only allow for better, more informed decision making, it will also contribute positively to the school environment.

We must affirm our commitment to Maryland students by ensuring that their voices are heard. House Bill 456 simply codifies the right for student members of county boards to vote on most issues in all local education agencies and then allows counties to expand upon those rights. We urge the General Assembly to appreciate and honor the voices of Maryland students.

**For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on House Bill 456.**

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<sup>1</sup> [How Students Can Help Build Better Education Policy. 2021](#)