

February 7 2024

Testimony on HB 456
County Boards of Education – Student Members – Voting Rights and Participation in Executive Sessions

Position: Favorable

To the Ways and Means Committee of the Maryland General Assembly -

I am grateful for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Common Cause and display the organization's support for House Bill 456.

Across the country, education faces a myriad of issues and the people most impacted have not been given a functional seat at the table. From curriculum changes to school safety concerns, young people are having decisions made on Boards of Educations that they sit on without voting power. Student members of these Boards of Education-are forced to watch decisions being made for them, while the nature of their own seats prevent them from being a part of said decisions. Giving student members on County Boards of Education voting rights and participation in executive sessions allows for a more functioning and more representative school board. Without voting rights and participation of executive sessions, the election of student members to Boards of Education serve only as a façade.

In harmony with a more representative school board, giving student members on county Boards of Education voting power validates the student elections. HB 456 serves to empower student members of the boards, as well as validate the elections that place them there. This is especially important for all the students affected by the decisions of the Boards of Education, as it is important to display a functioning electoral system at an early age to begin fostering positive attitude towards the national electoral system and civic participation.

The Student Members of Maryland's Boards of Education represent the next generation of leaders, civic participants, community organizers, and future elected officials. Common Cause Maryland works to empower this generation, and true youth representation is a crucial aspect of this mission and one that will serve our community in turn. Common Cause urges a favorable report on HB 456.

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Sincerely,
Ari Franco
Youth Engagement Organizer
Common Cause