

BILL: House Bill 0456, Senate Bill 0386 - County Boards of Education - Student Members - Voting Rights and Participation in Executive Sessions

DATE: February 7th, 2024

POSITION: FAVORABLE

COMMITTEE: Ways and Means Committee

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GLSEN Maryland, the statewide chapter of GLSEN National, a nonprofit organization centered on creating and sustaining inclusive K-12 education for LGBTQ+ students, supports HB 0456/SB 0386. Having students as voting members on various entities will support the development of life skills for youth, contribute to improved self-esteem, and assist students in cultivating democratic skills. All of these experiences will positively contribute to their development throughout their educational pursuits.

Student leadership is an important component of democratic schools (Levin, 1998). Having students be able to participate as voting members during executive sessions will help develop a useful skill set that can be utilized throughout their entire educational journey. As voting members, students will learn to research and take responsibility for their decisions and develop their leadership capabilities (Wallin, 2003). Students in this role will also sharpen their communication skills as they learn how to interact across various levels of administration, the community, and with their peers. This experience will also allow students to develop a deeper understanding of administrative and community processes (Wallin, 2003).

Students who are elected to serve in this role will gain the experience of being positively viewed by their peers as well as their school administrators (Mager & Nowak, 2012). This engagement will contribute to the students overall confidence and boost their self-esteem. Finally, students who participate in this capacity will gain invaluable knowledge of policies and practices that will lead them to be more engaged citizens in the future. GLSEN Maryland strongly believes that including students in processes that impact them is critical to sustainable outcomes for new policies and initiatives. We thank you for your time and respectfully request a FAVORABLE vote in committee.

References

Levin, B. (1998). The educational requirement for democracy. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 28, 57-79.

Wallin, D. (2003). Student leadership and democratic schools: A case study. *NASSP Bulletin*, 87, 55-78.

Mager, U. & Nowak, P. (2012). Effects of student participation in decision making at school. A systematic review and synthesis of empirical research. *Educational Research Review*, 7 (1), 38-61.

References: