



**House Bill 456/Senate Bill 386
County Boards of Education - Student Members –
Voting Rights and Participation in Executive Sessions
Ways & Means Committee – February 7, 2024
Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Out of School Time Network (MOST) is a statewide organization dedicated to closing opportunity gaps by expanding both the quantity and quality of afterschool and summer learning opportunities for school-aged young people. MOST serves as the backbone organization for the Maryland Coalition for Community Schools. The Maryland Coalition for Community Schools, founded in 2016, advocates for student and family success by leading the charge to expand the Community School Model in Maryland. The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) advocates for adequate funding, equitable policies, and transparent accountability statewide.

MOST, MD4CS, and MEC submit this testimony to support House Bill 456. School Boards play an important role in determining policies and budgets that impact students and schools. Student board members provide critical perspectives that only students currently enrolled in the school district can bring to the debates and discussions. Students live with the consequences of board decisions -both positive and negative. To truly value and give meaning to student input and allow students to represent the peers that often elect them to their positions, student members of the board should have the right to vote and participate in critical conversations.

Too often, education policy leaves out the people who have the most first-hand knowledge – the students themselves. Creating student positions on school boards without voting powers is a half-step. We appreciate the thoughtful approach HB456 takes to providing a baseline of rights for student board members and allowing Counties to decide on going further. MOST, MD4C, and MEC urge a favorable report for HB456. Free State PTA, an MEC Member, also specifically signs on to the testimony.

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