



SB 307 Anne Arundel County Board of Education - Student Member Scholarship - Increase

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

SUPPORT

Our names are Julien Halleman, Noah Gordon, Olivia Chin, and Dhru Nahan, and we are students of Anne Arundel County and executive team members of the Chesapeake Regional Association of Student Councils (CRASC). We are writing in support of SB 307- Anne Arundel County Board of Education - Student Member Scholarship - Increase. If passed, this bill would increase the scholarship given to the Anne Arundel County Student Member of the Board (SMOB) from \$8000 to \$15,000, thus matching the recent increase of the other members' salaries.

Historically, the Anne Arundel County SMOB has received equal compensation to their fellow board members—a precedent that should continue. To do otherwise is not only inequitable but also fundamentally discriminatory. The SMOB holds full voting rights, serves on committees, and participates in every hearing, making their responsibilities identical to those of adult board members. Despite these demands, they must also balance the role with full-time academic responsibilities. Given this, equal compensation is not just justified but essential.

From a budgetary standpoint, the \$7,000 increase is negligible in the context of Anne Arundel County's overall expenditures. The SMOB role is highly demanding, and the student representative sacrifices opportunities to work paying jobs or internships that could offer more income. Raising the scholarship to \$15,000 would expand access to this leadership position by encouraging lower-income students to run, ensuring that a diverse range of perspectives within AACPS is represented.

Furthermore, the rising cost of higher education further justifies this increase. For example, the total cost of attendance at the University of Maryland is roughly \$30,000 per year, while the current \$8,000 scholarship only covers just over a quarter of those costs. Increasing the scholarship would be an important step toward making higher education more affordable for SMOBs.

To our knowledge, Anne Arundel County is the only local school board in the nation with a Student Member of the Board (SMOB) who holds full voting rights—and the only truly full-voting SMOB in Maryland. AACPS students take pride in their SMOB as a representative for those without a voice in decisions that significantly impact their lives. Such a vital role deserves equal compensation. The CRASC Legislative Department refers back to the following relevant clauses of the CRASC Platform:

- *CRASC Supports...* Student participation in the decision-making processes; (Plank 1, Clause G)
- *CRASC Supports...* Adequate funding for different student programs within Anne Arundel County Public Schools; (Plank 8, Clause D)

In line with CRASC's commitment to student representation and adequate funding for student programs, we appreciate your consideration and strongly encourage a **FAVORABLE** committee report on SB307.

Respectfully Submitted,

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