

Good Afternoon, Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and distinguished members of the committee.

My name is Veda Puvvala and I am a student from Crofton High School. While this testimony is from a personal perspective, I also currently serve as the CRASC – Chesapeake Region Association of Student Councils – Legislative Liaison. With that in mind, I am here today to urge your support for HB0436.

Simply put, this bill will increase the compensation of the president, the vice president, and other members of the Anne Arundel County Board of Education to be \$25,000, \$24,000, and \$23,000, respectively. Further, this bill will increase the scholarship for a student member from its current \$8,000 to \$23,000.

This hefty increase is truly a reflection of the hard work that goes into being a student member of the Anne Arundel County Board of Education. As the only county board of education in the nation with full student voting rights, increasing the pay of the student member would truly acknowledge the level of work they do, similar to other board members.

The perspective a student member brings is imperative to education policy. They understand how mental health resources are actually being used and which bathroom policies make students feel safe. However, at the current scholarship, many students can't afford to be a student member.

On average, a minimum wage job earns a student roughly \$900 a month however, with the current student member scholarship students would receive about \$600 a month. Without fair compensation for the student board member many voices are excluded from educational policy.

HB0436 recognizes the value of a student member and works to remove financial barriers that may limit many students from advocating student perspective as a member on the Anne Arundel County Board of Education.

With that said, I strongly urge a favorable report for HB0436.

Thank you for your time.

