

# HOUSE BILL 575

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6lr1261

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By: ~~Delegate Wilkins~~ **Delegates Wilkins, Addison, Coley, Ebersole, Feldmark, Mireku-North, Palakovich Carr, Pasteur, Patterson, Roberson, Vogel, Wims, and Young**

Introduced and read first time: January 28, 2026

Assigned to: Ways and Means

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Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

House action: Adopted

Read second time: March 6, 2026

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## CHAPTER \_\_\_\_\_

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Public Schools – Student Attendance – Excused Absences for Civic Engagement**

3 FOR the purpose of requiring ~~the State Department of Education and~~ each county board of  
4 education to adopt a certain attendance policy for public school students who are  
5 engaged in certain civic activities; requiring a county board to adopt certain policies  
6 and procedures; and generally relating to student attendance in public schools and  
7 excused absences.

8 BY adding to

9 Article – Education

10 Section 7–301.4

11 Annotated Code of Maryland

12 (2025 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

13 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,

14 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

15 **Article – Education**

16 **7–301.4.**

17 (A) **IN THIS SECTION, “PUBLIC FACING BODY” MEANS AN ENTITY THAT:**

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



1           **(1) MEETS TO SET OR CARRY OUT PUBLIC POLICY;**

2           **(2) IS SUBJECT TO THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT; AND**

3           **(3) CONSISTS OF MEMBERS WHO ARE ELECTED OR APPOINTED BY**  
 4 **THE GOVERNOR OR A LOCAL EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY.**

5           **(B) (1) SUBJECT TO SUBSECTION ~~(B)~~ (C) OF THIS SECTION, ~~THE~~**  
 6 **~~DEPARTMENT AND~~ EACH COUNTY BOARD SHALL ADOPT AN ATTENDANCE POLICY**  
 7 **FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS THAT TREATS A STUDENT'S ABSENCE AS EXCUSED**  
 8 **IF, DURING A REGULAR SESSION OF ~~THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY~~ A PUBLIC FACING**  
 9 **BODY, THE STUDENT:**

10                   **(I) TESTIFIES VIRTUALLY OR IN PERSON AT A HEARING OF ~~ANY~~**  
 11 **~~COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY~~ A PUBLIC FACING BODY; ~~OR~~**

12                   **(II) CONDUCTS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING:**

13                           **1. MEETING WITH ~~LEGISLATORS~~ MEMBERS OF THE**  
 14 **PUBLIC FACING BODY; AND**

15                           **2. ~~ADVOCATING FOR OR AGAINST LEGISLATION AND~~**  
 16 **CONTRIBUTING TO THE CONSIDERATION, DEVELOPMENT, OR IMPLEMENTATION OF**  
 17 **POLICY ISSUES; ~~AND~~**

18                           **3. ~~OTHER ACTIVITIES DEEMED TO BE CIVIC~~**  
 19 **~~ENGAGEMENT BY THE DEPARTMENT AND THE APPLICABLE COUNTY BOARD~~ OR**

20                   **(III) PARTICIPATES IN THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY**  
 21 **PAGE PROGRAM.**

22           **(2) ~~(1)~~ IF THE ATTENDANCE POLICY REQUIRES A NOTE TO EXCUSE**  
 23 **AN ABSENCE, THE POLICY SHALL AUTHORIZE AN APPROPRIATE REPRESENTATIVE**  
 24 **TO PROVIDE A NOTE OR REASONABLE DOCUMENTATION TO EXCUSE THE STUDENT'S**  
 25 **ABSENCE.**

26                   **~~(H) AN EXCUSED ABSENCE UNDER THIS SECTION IS A LAWFUL~~**  
 27 **~~ABSENCE AND MAY NOT BE INCLUDED IN A CALCULATION OF CHRONIC~~**  
 28 **~~ABSENTEEISM FOR THE STUDENT OR THE SCHOOL.~~**

29           **~~(B)~~ (C) (1) A COUNTY BOARD SHALL ADOPT POLICIES AND**  
 30 **PROCEDURES TO CARRY OUT THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS SECTION.**

1           **(2) POLICIES AND PROCEDURES ADOPTED UNDER THIS SUBSECTION**  
2 **SHALL AUTHORIZE A STUDENT TO BE EXCUSED FOR ~~AT~~:**

3                   **(I) AT LEAST 15 HOURS OR 2 SCHOOL DAYS TO TESTIFY OR**  
4 **CONDUCT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES UNDER SUBSECTION ~~(A)(1)~~ (B)(1)(I) OR**  
5 **(II) OF THIS SECTION; OR**

6                   **(II) THE LENGTH OF TIME OF THE PAGE PROGRAM FOR CIVIC**  
7 **ENGAGEMENT CONDUCTED UNDER SUBSECTION (B)(1)(III) OF THIS SECTION.**

8                   **(3) EXCUSED ABSENCES FOR TESTIFYING OR CONDUCTING CIVIC**  
9 **ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES UNDER SUBSECTION (B)(1) OF THIS SECTION SHALL BE IN**  
10 **ADDITION TO ANY EXCUSED ABSENCES UNDER EXISTING POLICIES OR PROCEDURES**  
11 **OF THE COUNTY BOARD.**

12           SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July  
13 1, 2026.

Approved:

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Governor.

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Speaker of the House of Delegates.

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President of the Senate.