

KAREN LEWIS YOUNG
Legislative District 3A
Frederick County

Health and Government
Operations Committee

Subcommittees

Government Operations
and Estates and Trusts
Insurance and Pharmaceuticals



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Annapolis Office
The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 416
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3436 · 301-858-3436
800-492-7122 Ext. 3436
Fax 410-841-3412 · 301-858-3412
Karen.Young@house.state.md.us

District Office
253 East Church Street
Suite 100
Frederick, MD 21701
301-858-3436
Fax 301-662-8521

Testimony in Support of HB 883

Frederick County Board of Education – Student Member

HB 883 clarifies the roles and responsibilities of future student members of the Frederick County Board of Education. The Bill defines the process by which student members are elected; outlines the ethical standards by which they serve; and authorizes them to vote on Board matters and participate in Executive Sessions of the Board. The Bill also defines those matters on which student members will not vote, including personnel, school calendars, redistricting, and budgetary issues. The Frederick County delegation has voted in favor of this bill.

Currently, seven (7) jurisdictions give student Board members full voting rights, including, Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties, and Baltimore City. In these counties the student member vote is established in State Law, and student members are allowed to participate in closed (Executive) sessions. In addition, the student member of the State Board of Education has voting rights even though the member is appointed.

In a prior letter of support, the Frederick Board of Education noted that full participation in Board of Education meetings demonstrates confidence in the student Board member and students in general. More than simply allowing students a voice, the full involvement of student members increases their investment and their peers' engagement with decisions being made about their educations. When student members are given full and meaningful roles on Boards of Education, they come fully prepared to participate in Board discussions of matters that directly affect students on a daily basis.

HB 883 specifies that all middle and high school students in the county will vote for the Student Board member. The Student Board member will be selected from among the junior and senior classes in the county. The newly elected student member will shadow the outgoing member from the date of the election until the new term of service begins on July 1st.

In all cases, student members are protected from exposure to issues that may become contentious or political. Student members do not vote on budgetary expenditures, contracts, personnel matters, collective bargaining, the school calendar, and any judicial functions of the Board of Education. Further, student participation is contingent upon full participation in Board meetings and working sessions and thorough preparation and involvement in Board meetings.

Maryland was the first state in the nation to require 75 hours of service as a condition of graduation. The term "Service Learning" was applied to this requirement to set clear expectations that students are to be involved in meaningful and impactful service in their communities. It has become increasingly clear that young people become life-long participants in their communities when they have had early and meaningful opportunities to make a difference.

HB 883 acknowledges the significance of the Student Board member's position and commitment to Frederick County's Board of Education and its student body. National statistics suggest that young people do not vote, even in significant elections. This bill is an important step in engaging young people and demonstrating the importance of their vote. At the same time, there is a national effort to be more inclusive in extending voting rights to all populations who live in this democracy. **HB 883** is an important step forward for our community and for our future.

For these reasons, I urge you to support **HB 883** and I request a favorable report.

Thank you,

Delegate Karen Lewis Young