



# **TESTIMONY PACKAGE 'B'**

**Elected Officials  
and Organizations**

2021

## MARYLAND STUDENT COALITION

### PACKAGE 'B'

#### Contents:

Number	Name	Description
1	Howard County Council	A joint letter from several members of the Howard County Council.
2	Maryland SMOB Coalition	A joint letter from several current serving student members (or equivalent) of boards of education.
3	MYAC Support	The Maryland Youth Advisory Council ("MYAC") has passed a stance to officially support this initiative.
4	HCASC Stance	The Howard County Association of Student Councils ("HCASC") has passed a stance to officially support this initiative.
5	MCR Resolution	The Montgomery County Regional Student Government Association ("MCR") has passed a stance to officially support this initiative.
6	Sabina Taj	A former member of the Howard County Board of Education (2018-2020).

\*Please Note: Additional Organizations have supported this initiative, but did not submit written testimony in time to be filed with this package.

Please inquire for further information by contacting: [jonathon.dipietro1@gmail.com](mailto:jonathon.dipietro1@gmail.com)



# Howard County Council

George Howard Building  
3430 Court House Drive  
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043-4392

## COUNCILMEMBERS

Liz Walsh  
District 1

Christiana Rigby  
District 3

### TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB0753

#### Education - Student-Organized Peaceful Demonstrations - Student Discipline and Policy

February 10, 2021

Dear Chair Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony to the Committee. We are writing today to express our **support for HB0753**, legislation introduced by Delegate Ebersole to protect the rights of students to peacefully demonstrate in schools.

In recent years, students across Maryland have organized and led peaceful demonstrations at school to protest gun violence, police brutality, and racism. While many of these demonstrations have been permitted in Maryland school districts, some students have faced threats of disciplinary action for exercising their right to speech and peaceful protest. This bill would ensure that all Maryland students are protected from disciplinary action if they choose to participate in peaceful, organized protests on school campuses.

We have met with several student leaders and activists in Howard County who have highlighted the importance of protecting this right for students in schools. As we continue to witness incredible leadership and courage from young people in our community who are standing up for social justice and change, this legislation makes important strides in protecting students' right to speech and peaceful demonstration.

Our school systems should be empowering students to be civically engaged and educating young people on how to use their agency for change. HB0753 will support those goals and support our students. Thank you for your consideration of this legislation. We respectfully encourage a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Liz Walsh".

Liz Walsh  
Councilmember, District 1

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Christiana Mercer Rigby".

Christiana Rigby  
Councilmember, District 3

Monday, February 8, 2021

The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser, Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee  
Room 131, House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: In Favor of HB0753 Sponsored by Delegate Eric Ebersole

## **Students of Maryland's Boards of Education**

Dear Honorable Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

We, the students of Maryland's Boards of Education, are in favor of HB0753. Our commitment to student voice and advocacy led us to run for our positions, and HB0753 seeks to help uplift and protect every student in their advocacy.

If passed, this bill would allow universal rights for students to demonstrate on school grounds without fear of consequence, elevates student voices, recognizes the importance of peaceful demonstration, and serves an important educational experience; civic responsibility.

We are at a time in history when young people are increasingly involved in movements to bring about change, be it on issues of racial justice or the climate. And why shouldn't we be – we are demanding change for our own future; we are holding ourselves and our elected leaders accountable to uphold our responsibilities to future generations.

Students peacefully protesting for what they believe in is nothing new. It was famously four college students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University who in 1960 started the sit-in movement when they sat at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. Their seemingly simple protest and show of great courage is arguably one of the most important events of the Civil Rights movement. Similarly, the Cambridge movement over on our Eastern Shore here in Maryland was led by students who, like the Greensboro Four, conducted sit-ins and other peaceful protests against segregation.

Most of us had just entered high school when the entire country watched the Parkland Massacre occur, and what resulted was one of the most prominent examples of youth protest and advocacy to date: the March for Our Lives movement. Many of us helped respectfully and responsibly demonstrate in solidarity with fellow students across the nation. Actions like these must be protected, and students should not fear repercussions for their advocacy. The right to non-violent protest and assembly is one of the fundamental civil liberties of American democracy, and students should be accorded this right without fear of retribution.

For the reasons stated above, we urge the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 0753.

Signed in solidarity,

Drake Smith  
Student Member  
Anne Arundel County Board of Education

Kyree' M. Sykes  
Student Commissioner  
Baltimore City Board of School  
Commissioners

Devanshi Mistry  
Student Representative  
Carroll County Board of Education

Ian Herd  
Student Member  
Charles County Board of Education

Jarrett M. Miller  
Student Member  
Garrett County Board of Education

Phoebe Bailey  
Student Member  
Harford County Board of Education

Zachary Koung  
Student Member  
Howard County Board of Education

Rachel Jones  
Student Member  
Kent County Board of Education

Jason T. Wu  
Student Member  
Maryland State Board of Education

Ninah Jackson  
Student Member  
Prince George's County Board of Education

Kevin Bokoum  
Student Member  
Washington County Board of Education

**Disclaimer:**

The views expressed in this letter are the personal views of the signatories and do not necessarily reflect those of any of our respective organizations or Boards of Education.

## **MARYLAND YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL ENDORSEMENT**

**Written by the Maryland Student Coalition**

On December 12, 2020 the Maryland Youth Advisory Council (“MYAC”) voted to approve two motions:

- 1) In favor of the provided draft legislation; *and*
- 2) Assigns their Legislative Committee to assist in advocating for the initiative and promote the principles outlined in the provided resolution.

**Please Note:** This document is not from the Maryland Youth Advisory Council. Official written support for the Student Demonstrations Initiative can be obtained by contacting the Chairperson of MYAC, Ian Herd.

Mr. Herd can be contacted at: [ianherd2004@gmail.com](mailto:ianherd2004@gmail.com)



Maryland Youth Advisory Council  
c/o Governor's Office of Crime  
Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services  
100 Community Place,  
Crownsville, MD 21032

Ian Herd, *Chair*  
Marvin Li, *Vice-Chair*  
Maggie Harkins, *Secretary*

February 17, 2021

## **Re: Students' Right to Demonstrate in Schools**

### **Position: Support**

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council (the Council) prides itself on being a group of young adults who work to serve as a voice for youth in the state of Maryland. As leaders in our communities and in our State, and as appointees of the Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, Maryland Association of Student Councils, Maryland Higher Education Commission, and the University System of Maryland, we take every opportunity to advise legislators and the Governor regarding issues facing youth.

The Council advocates for the protection and expansion of youth voice in multiple settings, and extends this advocacy to educational institutions. As the resolution indicates, there are numerous counties in Maryland that employ attendance policies that have the potential to infringe upon students' First Amendment rights when used in inappropriate manners, such as the dissuasion of protest or other student-led peaceful assembly. Current attendance policies can be applied inappropriately, with penalties for missed instruction time intentionally used to discourage students from attending student demonstrations. The resolution seeks to limit the possibility for abuse of such policies and thus improve the application and preservation of students' First Amendment rights.

The Council consistently demonstrates the value and importance of youth civic engagement; visible through its advocacy outcomes and the continued activism of former Council members. Many alumni further their pursuit of civic engagement, through other youth-led organizations, coalitions, and public office. The inclusion and support of youth voice empowers young people to be productive and civically engaged citizens. Civic engagement is a valued and continuous element of the Maryland education curriculum. To limit students' rights in acts directly contributing to civic engagement is a great disservice to the students, their community, and the value of their education. When adult stakeholders support processes that meaningfully involve youth and/or allow for youth engagement, individual students can accrue relational and developmental benefits from participation and engagement itself, promoting both youth and community well-being. (e.g., Akiva, Cortina, & Smith, 2014; Larson, Walker & Pearce, 2005; Zeldin, 2004).

The Council unequivocally supports this resolution, as it creates clear guidelines and objectives to foster and protect First Amendment rights for students. Without such protections, students can be subjected to unjust interpretations and applications of school policies, with the intent to discourage and disabnd student-led demonstrations on school grounds.

For these reasons, the Council supports **Students' Right to Demonstrate in Schools**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ian Herd".

Ian Herd, Chair  
Maryland Youth Advisory Council

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maya Matava".

Maya Matava, Legislative Committee Chair  
Maryland Youth Advisory Council





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A STANCE OF THE  
HOWARD COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT COUNCILS REGARDING:

**Public Secondary School Students' Rights to Peacefully Assemble  
and Demonstrate on School Grounds and During School Hours**

Article XI, Section 5 of the Constitution of the Howard County Association of Student Councils states that "The Legislative Affairs Committee shall provide the General Assembly stances on HCPSS Policy or Legislative Matters, in writing, and the General Assembly, by majority vote, will have the ability to vote to uphold or deny that stance"; and

The Legislative Affairs Committee has provided a stance regarding a "legislative matter", in writing, that has been approved by the Howard County Association of Student Councils General Assembly; therefore

*The following stance is issued by the Howard County Association of Student Councils:*

The Howard County Association of Student Councils is in favor of protections for secondary school students' right to peacefully demonstrate on school grounds, during school hours; and

The Howard County Association of Student Councils is in favor of advancing the principles outlined in the resolution, submitted with the stance proposal ("A House Joint Resolution Concerning: Public School Students' Rights to Peacefully Assemble and Demonstrate on School Grounds and During School Hours") and will advocate on behalf of these proposed principles.

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**SPONSORED**

Mr. Jonathon DiPietro, *Chair*

Mr. Peter Banyas, *Vice-Chair*

**DATED**

Thursday, December 10, 2020

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## **Public School Students' Rights to Peacefully Assemble and Demonstrate on School Grounds, During School Hours**

Sponsors: Helena Aytenfisu and Maeve Sanford-Kelly

WHEREAS Montgomery County Regional Student Government Association is dedicated to student advocacy and thus the ability of students to assemble is central to MCR's mission;

WHEREAS Many students are not comfortable participating in demonstrations or peaceful assemblies unaware of what protections to their freedom of assembly exist;

WHEREAS the right to freedom of speech and assembly are protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution;

WHEREAS there are school systems around Maryland that do not outline students rights and responsibilities with respect to demonstrations and assemblies as clearly and accessibly as Montgomery County Public Schools does;

WHEREAS a Maryland General Assembly resolution recognizing the rights and responsibilities of students with respect to speech and assembly, as well as encouraging school systems around Maryland to promote policies outlining these rights and responsibilities, would be an important step for further protecting students rights to advocacy; therefore

**Be It Hereby Resolved:** The MCR-SGA is in support of the principles outlined in the [Public School Students' Rights to Peacefully Assemble and Demonstrate on School Grounds, During School Hours](#) sample bill and will advocate on the behalf of these proposed principles.



[In regards to HB0753] “I fully support students’ right to organize or participate in a student–organized peaceful demonstration.”

Sabina Taj  
Member of the Howard County Board of Education (2018-2020)