

STATEMENT REGARDING THE SMOB POSITION

This statement was issued on behalf of the Legislative Affairs Committee of the Howard County Association of Student Councils, the only officially recognized student coalition and advocacy organization in Howard County. This statement was released following filed litigation against the voting rights of the Student Member of the Howard County Board of Education.

Dated This:

Saturday, December 19, 2020

Howard County, Maryland

"When we vote, we take back our power to choose, to speak up, and to stand with those who support us and each other." - Loung Ung, American-Cambodian Human Rights Activist.

Howard County has had a Student Member of the Board ("SMOB") since 1988, and a vote on the Board of Education since 2007. The SMOB serves in the unique role of representing the interests of the largest stakeholder in education, the students. I have been honored and privileged to work with several Student Members of the Board of Education throughout my secondary school career. Throughout their tenure, the Student Members have served with dignity and responsibility to faithfully discharge the duties of their office. Along with being a full-time Board Member, they must simultaneously juggle academics, and manage personal and extracurricular activities. Howard County is continuously growing and with the changing dynamics in education, student representation is even more important. Students are the motivation behind all educational decisions, and their voices must be taken seriously throughout the policy making process.

As such, the Student Member of the Board must be able to provide input from the student voice and have a binding vote to ensure the school system continues to be responsive to the needs and opinions of county students. The SMOB's vote solidifies the Board's responsibility to act in the interests of the students, those directly affected by Board decisions. In a joint statement released by the Students of Maryland's Boards of Education, they state, "For a Student Member's voting rights to be in jeopardy based on how they vote is not only an insult to the students that elected them and the character of the student under attack, but also to the principle of democracy itself."

The Howard County Student Member of the Board is democratically elected through a fair and open process, by students across Howard County's thirty-five middle and high schools, representing roughly sixty-thousand students. The roles of the Howard County Association of Student Councils ("HCASC") and the SMOB's position are separate yet co-dependent. The SMOB, an ex-officio member of the Officer Team, utilizes HCASC as a forum to hear from

various students across the county and to educate the student body on actions taken by the Board. At HCASC, we fundamentally believe in every student's power to advocate for the things they are most passionate about. Together, we have held forums to advocate for mental health and school safety and have introduced substantive legislation that affects students across the state of Maryland, among many other initiatives led by the Student Member of the Board.

The Legislative Affairs Committee ("LAC") of the Howard County Association of Student Councils stands with the Student Member of the Board of Education and will continue to advocate for the voting rights of the SMOB. We will continue to support the SMOB through advocacy and encourage all Howard County students to express their support for our (*we the students*) vote on the Board of Education.

As Chair of the Legislative Affairs Committee, I submit the attached stance and resolution to be voted on by the HCASC General Assembly. ***UPDATE: Both the stance and resolution were passed by the HCASC General Assembly by near unanimous consent.**

Signed,

Mr. Jonathon T. DiPietro

Chairperson, Legislative Affairs Committee
Howard County Association of Student Councils

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

The Howard County Student Member of the Board of Education

Sponsor: Mr. Jonathon DiPietro

Second: Mr. Alexander Horn

WHEREAS: The Howard County Association of Student Councils is an organization committed to lifting up student voices and fighting for student rights; and

WHEREAS: The Howard County Public School System is committed to “Student-Centered Practices” and that “Students are at the forefront of every strategy and decision. The values, opinions, beliefs, and perspectives of individual and groups of students are actively pursued to inform instructional approaches and enhance the school environment.”; and

WHEREAS: The Student Member of the Board of Education is an essential pillar of student advocacy in the Howard County Public School System; and

WHEREAS: There is an increased conversation around the importance of the Student Member of the Board of Education; be it therefore

RESOLVED: That the Howard County Association of Students Councils supports the preservation of the voting rights of the Student Member of the Howard County Board of Education; be it further

RESOLVED: That the General Assembly of the Howard County Association of Student Councils mandates the Legislative Affairs Committee to advocate for the preservation of the voting rights of the Student Member of the Board of Education.

This resolution has been voted on by the General Assembly of the Howard County Association of Student Councils and approved with unanimous consent.

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

The Howard County Student Member of the Board of Education

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 voting rights for the Student Member of the Howard County Board of Education; and

The Howard County Association of Student Councils is in favor of advancing the principles outlined in the resolution submitted with this stance proposal (“A Resolution of the Howard County Association of Student Councils Regarding The Howard County Student Member of the Board of Education”) and will advocate on behalf of these proposed principles.

SPONSORED

Mr. Jonathon DiPietro, *Chair*

PASSED

Sunday, January 17, 2021
