

February 12, 2021

TO:	Members of the Ways and Means Committee; Maryland House of Delegates
FROM:	Elani Bui, lanibear0027@gmail.com, 301-515-0426
RE:	House Bill 753: Education - Student-Organized Peaceful Demonstrations - Student Discipline and Policy
POSITION:	In Favor

Chair Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Committee, thank you for your time to consider my testimony. I am writing as a student from Montgomery in favor of House Bill 753.

Students are increasingly interested in politics and participating in social events. A Civic Education article notes that "increasing students' political interest has been a longstanding goal of civic education. One way to trigger students' interests in political issues is by engaging them first in an attention grabbing activity." Demonstrating on school grounds should be included as a school-approved activity to teach students about current events and provide an educational experience about civic responsibility. By allowing students to demonstrate their opinions without fear of consequence, schools will foster logical, knowledgeable voters. A survey acknowledges how the future generation of voters "shows unprecedented levels of interest in both political engagement and student activism, underscoring the youth vote's potential to reshape the electoral landscape." When allowing students to demonstrate on school grounds, schools train future generations to be active in society. Of course, regulations must be put in place, but politics should be taught early to prevent ignorant voters. Students are the stakeholders in the future of education and society in general. It's important to help implement ways to make world studies and history classes interactive to give us students a more profound understanding of controversial topics and the political workings.

Concerning protests, sources will call the Black Lives Matter protests somewhat chaotic. Although the original intent was to demonstrate peacefully, a human's right, multiple demonstrations ended in violence and vandalism. If schools were to allow peaceful protests on school grounds, it elevates student voice, leadership ability, and recognizes the importance of peaceful demonstration. Students who grow up peacefully demonstrating and see the positive effects will be less likely to resort to violent measures. Psychological research finds that "where people don't believe their appeals to authorities will be heard, protesters may be more likely to adopt violent methods of protest." If schools accommodate students' right to demonstrate without fear of consequences, students will grow up with the belief that their voice matters, and that authorities will notice their problems. This can eliminate violent measures during demonstrations in the future.

Through my own experiences, I find the ability to hold demonstrations a productive way to create change and an insightful learning experience. In 5th grade, my elementary school would have Co-ed soccer on Fridays. There weren't that many participants during girl soccer, so Co-ed soccer was our chance to play more competitively. Except, the boys who played wouldn't pass the ball to any of us girls. In fact, they hardly acknowledged us as teammates. We would be picked last, and the games usually turned into boys against girls teams. When one of my close friends

brought the issue up to a teacher, the teacher said, "Maybe if you ran fast and played better, you could compare to the boys." Fueled by this comment, she hosted a protest to instigate change. Almost everybody in 5th grade participated in it. The protest didn't do anybody any harm; it was mainly a group of students marching around with signs and calling for change. This experience with demonstration on school grounds wasn't harmful to anybody. Eventually, other teachers, who were equally annoyed as us students, resolved the issue and used the experiences as a lesson about gender equality. That's what these demonstrations should be used as: an interactive lesson.

That is why allowing students to demonstrate on school grounds without negative consequences will prove beneficial. For the reasons stated above, I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 753.