

February 5th, 2021

TO: Members of the Ways and Means Committee; Maryland House of Delegates

FROM: Samuel Chernoff, chernoffsam932@gmail.com, 240-532-1614, 103 Discovery Court La Plata, MD

RE: House Bill 629: County Boards of Education – Student Member – Voting

POSITION: Oppose

Chair Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Committee, I am writing as a Student from Charles County in opposition of House Bill 629.

If passed, this bill would be a dangerous threat to the voices of student leaders throughout Maryland. Through the Student Member of the Board position, students in all of Maryland's 23 counties and Baltimore City are able to receive valuable experiences in civic engagement. In the case of some SMOBs this experience comes with a crucial responsibility, the power to vote. Through their vote on a school board, a SMOB is able to successfully advocate for the needs of the education system's largest group of constituents, the students. Infringing upon this process will cause severe consequences. SMOBs may not be able to vote on issues that directly impact the students, will have a harmful image of being seen as inferior to adult leaders, not be able to put the civic engagement education they received into action, and most importantly having the student voice be silenced when it is needed the most. When a legislator in the General Assembly needs to cast a difficult tie breaking vote, it is seen as a vital part of their job. The SMOBs of Maryland must be treated in the same regard to successfully represent the student voice.

For the reasons stated above, I urge the committee to issue a report in opposition of House Bill 629.