



*Maryland Association of*

**LOCAL MANAGEMENT BOARDS**

**February 1, 2021**

**HB 629 County Boards of Education – Student Member Voting – OPPOSE**

Dear Chair Kaiser and members of the House Ways & Means Committee,

The Maryland Association of Local Management Boards is comprised of 24 local organizations, the core purpose of which is to improve outcomes for Maryland's children, youth and families. Every Local Management Board (LMB) provides a unique set of outcomes-focused programs to meet the needs of the communities they serve. We work to end hunger, support early childhood initiatives, divert juveniles from the criminal justice system and keep children in school. At the core of what we do is to uphold the voices of the very populations we serve, including youth voice.

On behalf of the Maryland Association of Local Management Boards, we **strongly oppose HB 629: County Boards of Education – Student Member – Voting, which prohibits the youth member of county Board's of Education to be the deciding vote. This bill would severely limit the voice of youth on local Board's of Education.**

This bill seeks to remove student voice from local education decision making processes that have been in place in the state of Maryland nearly fifty years. Since 1974, Maryland has recognized the importance of student voice and agency in their own education by first creating the student position on the local Board of Education in Anne Arundel County and many jurisdictions followed shortly thereafter. Moreover, Maryland's State Board of Education has had a student voting member since 1985, who has the power to vote on nearly every issue that comes before the State Board of Education. Prohibiting the student member to cast a deciding vote essentially strips the youth position of any power tokenizing the youth position to one of show rather than meaningful action. This bill silences young people and strips them of any agency they have in their education. For these reasons, the Maryland Association of Local Management Boards strongly opposes HB 629.

Sincerely,

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