

Testimony Package: 'B'

**Elected Officials
and
Organizations**

Maryland Student Coalition

PACKAGE ‘B’

Contents:

Number	Name	Description
<i>1</i>	Howard County Council	A joint letter from several members of the Howard County Council.
<i>2</i>	Maryland SMOB Coalition	A joint letter from several current serving student members (or equivalent) of boards of education.
<i>3</i>	MYAC Support	The Maryland Youth Advisory Council (“MYAC”) has passed a stance to officially support this initiative.
<i>4</i>	HCASC Stance	The Howard County Association of Student Councils (“HCASC”) has passed a stance to officially support this initiative.
<i>5</i>	MCR Resolution	The Montgomery County Regional Student Government Association (“MCR”) has passed a stance to officially support this initiative.

*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



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,

Handwritten signature of Liz Walsh in blue ink.

Liz Walsh
Councilmember, District 1

Handwritten signature of Christiana Rigby in blue ink.

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



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.

SPONSORED

Mr. Jonathon DiPietro, *Chair*

Mr. Peter Banyas, *Vice-Chair*

DATED

Thursday, December 10, 2020

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.