

February 3, 2021

**Testimony in OPPOSITION of HB 0629 – *County Boards of Education – Student Member – Voting***

**Dear Chairman Kaiser and Members of the Committee,**  
Sunrise Movement Howard County opposes HB0629.

As a youth-led activist group, Sunrise Movement Howard County has strived to amplify student voices and spearhead initiatives for change. Starting from the 2018 Nancy Pelosi sit-in, the Sunrise Movement has made a statement: youth voices cannot be ignored.

The Student Member of the Board (SMOB) has been elected by students like us and has served as an avenue for student voices for over a decade. Removing the SMOB's ability to vote will silence the voices of thousands of students in Howard County.

This bill constitutes the second attempt to remove our Howard County SMOB's right to vote in matters regarding our education; the first being a lawsuit filed earlier this year in an attempt to break the Board of Education's tie on whether students should return to schools in-person. Revoking the Student Member's ability to vote simply because of differences in opinion is unacceptable. Students deserve to have a say in the matters that concern themselves and their education.

Removing the SMOB's right to cast a deciding vote effectively removes any voting power the SMOB holds. To remove this ability at a time when the Howard County SMOB has posed an opposition to returning to in-person learning sends a clear message: student voices are only valued when they align with parents' agendas. This bill and the lawsuit against the Howard County SMOB last year both share the intention of sending students back into school buildings during a pandemic, ultimately at the cost of our SMOB's voting rights.

This bill clearly devalues student voices. Each decision the Board of Education makes affects our everyday lives. We are the students, and we demand that the SMOB's right to hold power over the decisions that heavily influence us and our peers be protected.

Signed,  
Emma, Oliver, Lindsey, and Defne  
Sunrise Movement Howard County  
sunrisehoco@gmail.com