

**HB 629**

Feb. 5, 2021

**TO:** Members of the Ways & Means Committee  
**FROM:** Jonathon DiPietro, Chair (Legislative Affairs Committee, HCASC); and  
Peter Banyas, Vice-Chair (Legislative Affairs Committee, HCASC);  
*On Behalf of the Howard County Association of Student Councils.*  
**RE:** House Bill 629 – County Boards of Education – Student Member – Voting  
**POSITION: Oppose**

Chair Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Committee, we are writing as current high school students, and as the Chairs of the Legislative Affairs Committee of the Howard County Association of Student Councils, in **opposition to House Bill 629**.

House Bill 629 bars the student members of **all** boards of education across the state from casting the deciding vote on any matter before the board. The bill will have a chilling effect on the voice and impact of students across the state, by ensuring their votes do not matter on closely contested issues – in effect, their votes will only “count” if they agree with the majority of adults on the board. By that logic, their vote on the board is discarded. This entirely undermines the role and responsibility of the student member and entirely demeans the voice of the students that they represent.

At a time when civic engagement and listening to our youth is more critically important than at any point in our nation’s history, this bill denies real influence for students and discourages engagement in the part of our state and local government that most impacts their day-to-day lives: their school systems. An elected representative without a vote on key issues can not effectively represent their constituents.

For these reasons, on behalf of the Howard County Association of Student Councils’ Legislative Affairs Committee, we urge the committee to issue an **unfavorable report** on House Bill 629.