

February 5th, 2021

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

FROM: Henry Meiser, henry.meiser@gmail.com, 240-925-0600,
P.O. Box 651 Solomons, Maryland 20688

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 and Leader from Calvert County, in opposition of House Bill 629.

In 1988, Maryland established a position on their Educational Board to be filled by a student. Since then, nearly every county in the State of Maryland has followed the state's lead, making a position for the student voice to be heard across Maryland. Today, House Bill 629 puts our voice in jeopardy. This bill directly undermines a student's ability to be civically engaged with decisions regarding their own education. If passed, this bill will take away the Student Member of the Board's say in their constituent's education. In addition, this bill impresses that the student voice is inferior to that of adults, which goes against the principles of the Student Member's position on county and state Educational Boards. Students must be able to cast their vote on issues that heavily affect them. This bill also enforces hypocrisy, as The State of Maryland cannot, in good faith, mandate civic engagement education across all local school systems, while enforcing a law that directly inhibits the student's ability to act upon what they have learned.

As a student leader, involved in various organizations in the State of Maryland, I have worked with county and state Student Members, and their devotion, professionalism, and enthusiasm is equivalent to their counterparts. During the 2019-2020 school year, I had the pleasure of working with Ms. Naggena Ohri, the Student Member of the St. Mary's County Board of Education. During Ms. Ohri's tenure, she was able to successfully organize a fundraiser for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, not only raising more than \$450,000, but also highlighting the efforts of a Maryland Student. This is only one out of the numerous positive experiences that I have had with both county and state SMOBS, and to take away these dedicated student's voices would be to put a damper on the fire of student leadership in Maryland.

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

Signed, most respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Henry Meiser". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "H" and "M".

Henry Meiser