

Testimony In Opposition To HB 629: Brian Kramer

Thank you Chairwoman Kaiser and members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Brian Kramer and I am submitting written testimony in very strong opposition to HB 629 and the message it sends to student leadership throughout Maryland.

I'll be very blunt: it is deeply wrong to target the student voice and the already limited vote student board members have because of the outcome of a particular vote on a school board. This bill would not even be filed if a student listened to adults filing lawsuits in court to take away his right to vote rather than to his own intuition and the voices of his fellow students.

I've been a passionate advocate in favor of helping student board members get expanded voting rights since I was a junior in high school. I've seen how powerful their voice can be, even when I disagree with them on a particular issue. The voice of a student on the school board is a unique thing Maryland has in most counties and changing that is not the direction we should be going in at all. Instead of telling students we can't trust them to select a representative to speak on their behalf and bring up issues they care about, we should do the exact opposite.

Only two counties have a student board member with full voting rights: Anne Arundel and Montgomery. That number should grow, alongside expanding the compensation we give to student board members and giving them the ability to chair board committees. This committee would send a much better message to students if they expanded their voice and gave them more opportunities for civic engagement. Doing the opposite would be detrimental for the needs of students and would arbitrarily limit the already limited voice students have on school boards. To illustrate this, I have attached a map I created showing how limited student board members already are in Maryland, including the county that this dispute originated from.

I urge the members of the Ways and Means committee to reject this legislation and consider future legislation to strengthen student board member voting rights statewide. Please feel free to send me any questions or comments you may have about student board member voting rights and my experiences working with these amazing student leaders.

Kind regards,

Brian Kramer

bk3234a@student.american.edu