

February 2, 2023

**Testimony on HB 175
Baltimore County Board of Education – Student Member - Voting
Ways and Means**

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports HB 175, which would authorize the student member of the Baltimore County Board of Education to vote on capital and operating budget matters.

Currently, the student member of the Board (SMOB) votes on all issues except collective bargaining, capital and operating budgets, school openings and closings, and boundaries. Like any member of the Board, the SMOB is elected to represent the voice of their constituents, meaning the students of Baltimore County. As such, this representation should not be limited to certain issues, but extend to all areas that impact the SMOB's student constituents.

Common Cause Maryland is working to build the next generation of democracy leaders and believes that youth representation is key to further civic engagement in their future, the SMOB is a perfect example of this next generation.

Common Cause Maryland believes that the expansion of voting power to include capital and operating budget matters is imperative and finds the SMOB's input on school funding matters to be absolutely critical. These issues directly impact students in Baltimore County, and it should be expected that their elected representative has the ability to advocate for their interests.

As of today, the operating budget for Baltimore County Public Schools has increased by 5.5% equating to 91.5 million dollars based on Fiscal Year 2022, excluding capital projects. With the proposed 2023 budget, the school system is completing their largest ten-year construction program with projects including constructing new schools, adding/ replacing central air conditioning, etc., for "upgraded modern learning environments." If given the voting rights to capital and budget operating matters, the SMOB would directly influence how these projects would be implemented in the following school years.

The SMOB is a position that is a foray into further civic engagement in their lives post-graduation. They see firsthand what goes into improving educational public policy. **HB 175** would extend their power to include capital and operating budgets would enable them to see how their voice can impact the processes to enact policy in action.

Common Cause Maryland urges you to vote favorably on **HB 175**.