

**HB 0175 - Baltimore County Board of Education - Student Member – Voting**

Committee: Ways and Means

Date: February 1, 2023

POSITION: Support

Dear Madame Chair and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

I am writing to ask for your favorable report on **HB 0175 - Baltimore County Board of Education - Student Member – Voting.**

As a parent with children in two Baltimore County public schools I have watched as the Board of Education has struggled with consensus in recent years. A divided school board, while certainly not desirable, is probably a reality in today's very politically contentious world. In this environment, Baltimore County's school board – with frequent vacancies - has, at times, struggled to produce clear majorities on matters great importance. I feel that adding voting rights to the Student Member of the Board on issues of capital and operating budgets could help solve the short-term problem of producing clear majorities and give us a leg up on solving our greater problems of political division by showing young people how to have a voice in matters to impact them.

The argument will be made that student can't understand the complexities of school budgeting and lacks the maturity to produce an independent vote. I disagree. As a long-time observer of this board, I have seen many student members come through. Each one has impressed me with their intelligence and desire to understand. They have been consistently hard workers. I have seen the student members of this board challenge the adult members on legal, economic, social, and moral issues. And I have seen them do this at times when the adults in the room were barely worthy of that moniker.

Today's young people enter a world and nation that is troubled and bitterly divided. What better way to show them how measured and prudent involvement in the systems of government can work could we possibly have than letting them participate? The student member of the board votes on many important issues and should be allowed a voice in setting the spending priorities that affect them and their fellow students.

Sincerely,

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