

# **SB0386\_MD Youth Advisory Council\_Fav-2.pdf**

Uploaded by: Alexander Hossainkhail

Position: FAV



Maryland Youth Advisory Council  
c/o Governor's Office of Crime  
Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services  
100 Community Place,  
Crownsville, MD 21032

Grace Minakowski, *Chair*  
Will O'Donnell, *Vice-Chair*  
Folashade Epebinu, *Secretary*

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February 7, 2024

**Re: SB 386 | County Boards of Education – Student Members – Voting Rights and Participation in Executive Sessions**

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council prides itself on being a coalition of diverse young advocates and leaders who serve as a voice for youth in the state of Maryland. As leaders in our communities, and as appointees of the Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, Maryland Association of Student Councils, Maryland Higher Education Commission and the University System of Maryland, we take every opportunity to address relevant issues by influencing legislation, spreading public awareness and serving as a liaison between youth and policymakers regarding issues facing youth.

The inclusion of student voices in educational decision-making processes is not just beneficial; but essential for creating learning environments that are responsive to the needs of all stakeholders, from students, to parents, and teachers. **SB 386** recognizes the valuable perspective that students bring to discussions on educational policy and school administration, rightfully enhancing our ability to contribute meaningfully in conversations affecting our future.

**SB 386** proposes to amend current limitations on the voting rights of student members of the board, empowering these future leaders to vote on a wider range of matters affecting their constitutions—to provide actual, impactful, change.<sup>1</sup> This expansion is a necessary step towards bettering Maryland schools. In fact, a recent study suggested through analysis of 67 schools in Philadelphia, that student voice improves student engagement through better teacher care, competence, and overall feelings of belonging.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, students who thought their schools to be responsive to their critiques, on average, had better grades and attendance.<sup>3</sup> In 1975, Anne Arundel County became the *first* local board in the nation to afford full voting rights to a student member—creating a heightened sense of engagement and worth among students. Maryland is a leading state in education, which means we have the responsibility to set an example and accelerate education for both our young Marylanders and onlookers, just as Anne Arundel County did in 1975, and as other jurisdictions are now beginning to do.

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<sup>1</sup> Cai, Jinghong. 2021. “Students Serving on School Boards: Democratic Education in Action.” [Www.nsba.org](http://www.nsba.org). National School Boards Association. February 4, 2021.  
<https://www.nsba.org/Perspectives/2021/Students-Serving-on-School-Boards>.

<sup>2</sup> Conner, Jerusha, Michael Posner, and Bright Nsowaa. 2022. “The Relationship between Student Voice and Student Engagement in Urban High Schools.” *The Urban Review* 54 (5). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-022-00637-2>.

<sup>3</sup> Kahne, Joseph, Benjamin Bowyer, Jessica Marshall, and Erica Hodgkin. 2022. “Is Responsiveness to Student Voice Related to Academic Outcomes? Strengthening the Rationale for Student Voice in School Reform.” *American Journal of Education* 128 (3). <https://doi.org/10.1086/719121>.

**SB 386** not only emphasizes and addresses the current disparities in representation, but also underlines the need to empower youth stakeholders to carry their voices. As demonstrated by bodies like the Maryland Youth Advisory Council, young people are not apathetic to the decisions made by our adult leaders and have adequate knowledge to participate politically. By enabling student board members access to greater voting rights, we recognize their capability to contribute meaningfully to education discourse, ensuring that student voices are heard and considered throughout the decision-making process. The Council has voted in favor of endorsing **SB 386**, as it aligns with the Council’s Legislative Platform supporting:

- a. The appointment, elections, and rights of youth representatives (Article I. Youth Representation; Clauses B-F);
- b. The establishment of youth leadership positions in government (Article II. Youth Leadership; Clause D) and;
- c. Encouraging discourse between youth stakeholders regarding the well-being of students and the availability of resources (Article IV. Health and Social Issues; Clause P)

The Maryland General Assembly has the opportunity to pass impactful legislation that will lead Maryland to champion a proven model of student engagement, providing youth with the resources necessary to lead a brighter, more intelligent, and inclusive future for generations. For these reasons, the Council adamantly supports **SB 386**, and respectfully requests a favorable report from the committee. We thank you for your consideration of our position.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Minakowski', written in a cursive style.

Grace Minakowski, Chair  
Maryland Youth Advisory Council

# **SMOB Testimony (2).pdf**

Uploaded by: Alice Wilkerson

Position: FAV



**Senate Bill 386  
County Boards of Education - Student Members -  
Voting Rights and Participation in Executive Sessions  
February 7, 2024**

**Support**

Good afternoon Chair, Vice-Chair, and members of the Committee.

Advance Maryland supports SB386, which allows student members of boards of education to attend executive or special sessions in certain circumstances. At Advance Maryland, we work towards a Maryland with thriving, healthy and inclusive communities where all Marylanders have access to opportunity, including safe and affordable housing; economic prosperity; quality healthcare; reliable transportation; a restorative justice system; and a livable future. AMD supports HB456 because it would increase student voice in appropriate decisions, allowing local school systems to build a better, more equitable, learning environment.

One of the unique components of Maryland's education system is the establishment of "student members" on Boards of Education. This can be traced back to Anne Arundel County, in 1975, when in a bipartisan bill, the student member was given full voting rights, including access to executive sessions. The spread of the practice has followed, but not the rights. Even though student members are prevalent in almost every county in Maryland, only a handful of school systems allow them to enter executive sessions. It's time we give students a voice in all conversations, including those behind closed doors.

Executive sessions are often where the most complicated issues of the school system are discussed. It's important that student members are not decoration for adults to point to, but real people whose opinions are considered, especially decisions affecting them. Student members are often incredibly well-educated on the real atmosphere of schools, can acutely identify issues, and are the most determined to accomplish their goals in their short (usually one year), timespan. They are composed, well-read, and eager students who understand the nuance of issues, in no way dissimilar to adult board members. They interact more with students, teachers, administrators, and all school staff more than every one of their fellow board members. They deserve a voice.

This bill brings the student members' rights closer to adult board members and allows Maryland to build a better school system. Advance Maryland strongly urges the committee to issue a favorable report.

Testimony written by Tanish Gupta, Advance Maryland Intern

**SB0386\_County\_BOE\_Student\_Member\_Voting\_MLC\_FAV.pd**

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY FOR SB0386  
COUNTY BOARDS OF EDUCATION - STUDENT MEMBERS – VOTING RIGHTS AND  
PARTICIPATION IN EXECUTIVE SESSIONS**

**Bill Sponsor:** Senator Lewis-Young

**Committee:** Education, Energy, and the Environment

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Cecilia Plante, co-chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0386 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Our members are fully supportive of our representative democracy and the fact that residents in this state have a voice in state and local governance. This bill would allow student members of county Boards of Education to have a vote on some of the matters that the Board undertakes. Student members would be able to vote on any matter before the Board except –

- Dismissal or disciplinary action against personnel
- Hearings related to disciplinary action against personnel
- Appeals made related to disciplinary action against personnel

This would allow students to be more engaged in the matters that affect them the most. It would also serve to get students more engaged in local politics which our members wholeheartedly encourage.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

**SB 386 - YDM - FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Karson Kamenetz

Position: FAV





# Young Democrats of Maryland

**SB 386 - County Boards of Education - Student Members - Voting Rights and  
Participation in Executive Sessions  
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee - February 7th, 2024  
FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and committee members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in favor of SB 386, a bill which provides Student Members of the Board (SMOB) of Education with expanded voting rights on the Board of Education of each jurisdiction, excluding personnel decisions. The Young Democrats of Maryland represent the next generation of Marylanders and seek to advance policies which allow Maryland youth to thrive. This bill represents one of our top education priorities and we support it for two reasons: it increases youth voice on the Board of Education, and it promotes broader youth civic engagement.

The role of the Student Member of the Board of Education is simple — students are the largest stakeholders in K-12 education systems yet their voices are often underrepresented within the policy-making process. Currently of the 22 Maryland jurisdictions with student board members, only Baltimore County, Anne Arundel County, and Montgomery County grant their elected SMOBs full voting rights on the Board of Education. Only these three jurisdictions allow for the student member to have a direct say in the decisions that impact their own learning environment and experience. By providing broader voting rights to all student members of county boards of education, this bill gives students a voice in decisions related to their school districts' policy.

Expanding SMOB voting rights also strengthens student civic engagement. By having the opportunity to elect and engage with a SMOB with expanded voting rights, students are able to practice exercising civic duties like voting and holding their student leaders accountable, building civic muscle.

Some argue that the existing limited power SMOBs in many Maryland jurisdictions —partial, non-binding voting power on non-budget issues— already achieves the goal of this legislation. We strongly disagree; simply having a voice in the room where decisions are made is not the same as having a vote at the decision-making table. For these reasons, we respectfully ask for your support for SB 386 and strongly urge a favorable committee report.

Melissa Bender  
YDM Vice President for Political Affairs  
Chair, YDM Legislative and Policy Committee

Karson Kamenetz  
YDM Legislative and Policy Committee

# **SB386 - Favorable.pdf**

Uploaded by: Riya Gupta

Position: FAV



**Testimony in SUPPORT of  
Senate Bill 386: County Boards of Education – Student Members – Voting Rights and  
Participation in Executive Sessions**

**Ways and Means Committee**

**Position: Favorable**

February 7, 2024

At Strong Schools Maryland, we envision a Maryland that leads the nation in achieving equitable student outcomes through empowered stakeholder engagement – meaningfully engaging students in the decision-making process that will impact their education and future is a must. **Strong Schools Maryland stands in support of Senate Bill 386**, which will codify the right to vote on important issues, for student members of county boards of education.

Advocating for children’s education around Maryland means not only advocating for the needs of students, but also empowering them to be their own advocates and decision-makers. Our current education governance structure fails to codify certain voting rights of student members of county boards – resulting in some counties not granting voting rights or having limited voting rights for their student board member. These students bring unique insights, firsthand experiences, and well researched propositions, yet they are currently being excluded from the decision making process that impacts their first hand experience within the education system and their futures.

Simply put, SB 386 will lead to a more engaged and empowered student body. Research from the Center for American Progress supports that inclusion of student voice in the decision making process can increase student motivation and better school climate<sup>1</sup>. Codifying the rights of the student member of all local boards of education to vote on important issues will not only allow for better, more informed decision making, it will also contribute positively to the school environment.

We must affirm our commitment to Maryland students by ensuring that their voices are heard. Senate Bill 386 simply codifies the right for student members of county boards to vote on most issues in all local education agencies and then allows counties to expand upon those rights. We urge the General Assembly to appreciate and honor the voices of Maryland students.

**For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 386.**

*For more information, contact Riya Gupta at [riya@strongschoolsmaryland.org](mailto:riya@strongschoolsmaryland.org)*

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<sup>1</sup> [How Students Can Help Build Better Education Policy. 2021](#)

# **Testimony on SB386.pdf**

Uploaded by: Brenton Meade

Position: FWA

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Brenton Meade, I am a senior at Broadneck High School in Anne Arundel County, and I write to express my strong **support, with amendments**, for SB386/HB456. As the president of the Chesapeake Regional Association of Student Councils, I oversee the election of the Anne Arundel County Student Member of the Board of Education, the only such student member on a local board in the country with full voting rights, by the secondary school students of Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS). While our organization has prided itself on this privilege for half a century, the time for our fellow regional student councils to have a say on their boards of education has long been overdue.

This bill will expand voting rights for student members across the state, giving their students a long-awaited say in their education. At a time where education has become more politically toxic than ever, the clarity and genuine passion of student voice is needed, and the students of Western Maryland, Southern Maryland, and the Eastern Shore deserve to have the same stake in their education that the students of Central Maryland have. Students provide an invaluable perspective on educational matters because they see the first-hand impacts of policy changes, budget cuts, and curriculum on a regular basis, and allowing them to serve on boards of education prevents the unintended consequences we seek to avoid when creating policy.

Students who serve their communities on boards of education go on to serve our state and nation in impactful ways. The second student member of the Anne Arundel County Board of Education currently serves as a department chair at Georgetown University, and another student member who was elected by her colleagues as vice president of the board is the chief of staff to a senator in this body. These students are chosen by their peers through a variety of selection methods from county to county, but those rigorous processes produce student members who are driven by their passion to serve their community, demonstrating the character we ask of our children every day when they go to school.

While the bill aims to give representation to students across Maryland, it unintentionally restricts the existing voting rights of student members in Anne Arundel County, Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Baltimore County, and Baltimore City. Therefore, I respectfully propose that the bill be amended to strike any section where the additions restrict the voting rights of student members on the local boards of those counties. Additionally, I propose that the bill be amended to state that a local board's expansion of voting rights under its provisions cannot be revoked to ensure stability in the rights and powers of student members and to prevent politics from interfering with a student member fulfilling their responsibilities.

Thank you for your consideration and I urge a **favorable with amendments** report on SB386/HB456.

# **Testimony for SB0386 - Jordan Hayes.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jordan Hayes

Position: FWA

## Testimony in Support of

### Senate Bill 0386: County Boards of Education - Student Members - Voting Rights and Participation in Executive Sessions

February 7, 2024

Members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee, it is my pleasure to come before you and offer testimony in favor of Senate Bill 0386: County Boards of Education - Student Members - Voting Rights and Participation in Executive Sessions. If enacted, this bill would allow the Student Board Members of the State of Maryland to have voting rights that are par with the Student Member on the Maryland Board of Education, as well as participation in closed or executive sessions. With the addition of the proposed amendments we will not infringe upon the already heightened SMOB voting rights in counties such as Montgomery and Anne Arundel.

Student Board Member voting rights ensure the impact of student voice and input in decisions that are affecting education. This vote is imperative to strengthening the student voice. Many members of the community do not see the necessity in it, but the school system has a duty to uphold and part of that duty is utilizing and trusting the student voice and experience. This bill paves the way for enhancement in the student voice and proves that our society realizes both the importance and necessity of the student voice.

Over the past decades we as a state have had the opportunity to be a part of this unique experience. Student Board Members, while present across the country, are not as strong and powerful as the SMOBs of Maryland. Having been a part of this group of students for this past year I have learned just how empowered the students of Maryland are. We have developed a hunger for advocacy and the betterment of our education. This is a hunger shared by many leaders in the school system.

The student voice is something that is required in the improvement of education. The student vote is something that proves the school system values the input of the students it serves. As a student, prior to my term on the Board of Education, I found myself wondering how the adults in my school system knew how to make decisions beneficial to the students. Now, as a student Board member I wonder if the adults in my system truly value the importance of my experience and input. I love serving on the Calvert County Board, I have been nothing but welcomed. However, that does not mean my voice, at times, is overlooked because I am only 17 or because I am only a student.

By allowing my successors a vote on the Board of Education we are allowing students' experience to be valued, input to be accurately represented, and the ones being affected by our education system more than just a seat at the table.

To be direct. The school system serves the students and it is necessary that it hears, appreciates and values the student experience and voice. This vote will guarantee the student input on all matters. Matters that are affecting students across the various Local Education Agencies and the State of Maryland.

I urge a favorable report with amendments on Senate Bill 0386. Thank you.

# **SB0386 – County Boards of Education - Student Memb**

Uploaded by: Mara Babb

Position: FWA





## **SB0386 - County Boards of Education - Student Members - Voting Rights and Participation in Executive Sessions**

*Monday, February 5, 2024*

### **EDUCATION, ENERGY, & THE ENVIRONMENT** **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

Our names are Mara Babb, Subhashi Pradhan, Noor Chaudhry, and Julien Halleman, and we are students of Anne Arundel County Public Schools. On behalf of the Chesapeake Regional Association of Student Councils (CRASC), we are writing in support of SB0386 - County Boards of Education - Student Members - Voting Rights and Participation in Executive Sessions. If passed, this bill establishes a set of voting rights for all student members on the board (SMOB), regardless of what voting rights they currently have. The SMOBs stipulated in the bill would be able to vote on any matter other than personnel matters and appeals to the Superintendent.

CRASC respectfully proposes the following amendment to SB0386:

- Strike any sections of this bill in which the additions restrict existing voting rights of student members on local boards of education in certain counties/city (Anne Arundel County, Baltimore County, Baltimore City, Montgomery County, and Prince George's County)

CRASC is in strong support of the intent of this bill to expand the voting rights of SMOBs. Anne Arundel County's student member on the board of education has had full voting rights for decades to make educated decisions on all matters before the board. Through this privilege as a student leader, the Anne Arundel County SMOB stands out amongst others in Maryland as a representation of youth empowerment and resolve to hold the same rank on paper and in practice as adult members on the board.

This bill grants many counties rights that the student member would otherwise be deprived of on a systematic level. However, this conversely sets a baseline that takes away the established rights of multiple SMOBs, including in Anne Arundel County and Montgomery County. CRASC proposes to adjust the language of this bill without changing the intent of expanding voting rights for all SMOBs, and setting a flexible baseline based on the established rights of the county/city. These expanded voting rights will build a mutual trust between student and adult members, creating a culture of equality and excellence akin to the Anne Arundel County Board of Education.

CRASC is currently working with the Anne Arundel County Delegation to propose the stipulated amendments on the bill and urges the support of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee to pass this bill.

The CRASC Legislative Department refers back to the following relevant clauses of the CRASC Platform:

- *CRASC Supports...* "Full voting rights for all Student Members on Boards of Education;" (Plank I, Clause B)
- *CRASC Supports...* Opportunities for students to voice opinions on issues that directly affect students; (Plank 1, Clause F)
- *CRASC Supports...* Student participation in decision-making processes; (Plank 1, Clause G)

Accordingly, CRASC respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** committee report on SB0386.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mara Babb, Secretary of Legislation, [babbmara@gmail.com](mailto:babbmara@gmail.com)

Noor Chaudhry, Legislative Liaison, [noorschaudhry@gmail.com](mailto:noorschaudhry@gmail.com)

Julien Halleman, Legislative Liaison, [julienh123@icloud.com](mailto:julienh123@icloud.com)

Subhashi Pradhan, Legislative Liaison, [subhashi\\_pradhan@hotmail.com](mailto:subhashi_pradhan@hotmail.com)

**SB0386 S.M.o.B. Cover Letter (1).pdf**

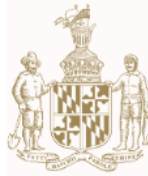
Uploaded by: Senator Karen Lewis Young

Position: FWA

KAREN LEWIS YOUNG  
*Legislative District 3*  
Frederick County

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Committee on Education, Energy,  
and the Environment



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

The Honorable Senator Feldman, Chair  
The Honorable Senator Kagan, Vice Chair  
Education, Energy, and Environment Committee  
Maryland Senate  
Annapolis, MD

February 7th, 2024

**Testimony in Support of SB386: Student Member Voting Rights**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and esteemed members of this committee,

My bill, SB386, will standardize voting rights of student members on county boards of education across Maryland by making it so that their voting rights are at least matching those enjoyed by the student member on the state board of education. However, all counties may increase voting rights. This bill simply provides a baseline.

Some counties only offer a symbolic vote with no real effect, while others grant more substantial voting rights and there have been dozens of local bills regarding the rights of students on boards of education.

What does this bill do specifically? Student members of county boards of education would be permitted to vote on all matters before the county board, except for dismissals or disciplinary actions of personnel, hearings concerning the dismissal of personnel, and appeals regarding the powers and duties of the county superintendent.

Students are the most important stakeholders in their education. By granting them a voice in this decision-making process, it builds civic

engagement and helps prepare students for their future. We allow driving at 16 and enlisting the military at 17. There is no minimum age for owning a rifle or shotgun in Maryland. Many students have jobs and pay taxes. Students today have lived through world-changing events like Covid. I do not see a good reason why a student member cannot vote at the county level on things that we allow at the state level.

There may be concerns that granting voting rights to individuals under 18 could violate the state constitution. However, Maryland's highest court affirmed the General Assembly's authority to establish voting rights for student board members in 2022<sup>1</sup>.

This bill is a compromise that will standardize implementation of student member voting rights while preserving the authority counties could grant and have already granted to their student members. This bill will ensure that those most affected by educational policies have a voice in shaping them. I urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,



Senator Karen Lewis Young

1) *Traci Spiegel et al. v. Board of Education of Howard County*, No. 18, September Term 2021

# **SB0386 SMOB Voting Rights Amendment.pdf**

Uploaded by: Senator Karen Lewis Young

Position: FWA



**SB0386/403220/1**

AMENDMENTS  
PREPARED  
BY THE  
DEPT. OF LEGISLATIVE  
SERVICES

05 FEB 24  
11:24:46

BY: Senator Lewis Young  
(To be offered in the Education, Energy, and the Environment  
Committee)

AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BILL 386

(First Reading File Bill)

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 1, in line 12, strike “3-2A-06,”; and in line 22, after “3-2A-01(a)” insert “, 3-2A-06”.

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 4, in line 11, after the semicolon insert “OR”; and strike beginning with the semicolon in line 12 down through “**ARTICLE**” in line 13.

On page 6, in line 3, strike “(A)”; and strike in their entirety lines 5 through 15, inclusive.

On page 7, in line 10, after the semicolon insert “OR”; and strike beginning with the semicolon in line 12 down through “**ARTICLE**” in line 14.

On page 26, in line 16, after the semicolon insert “OR”; and strike beginning with the semicolon in line 17 down through “**ARTICLE**” in line 19.

On page 34, in line 28, after the semicolon, insert “OR”.

On page 35, strike beginning with the semicolon in line 1 down through “**ARTICLE**” in line 3.

**SB0386-EEE\_MACo\_OPP.pdf**

Uploaded by: Brianna January

Position: UNF



## **Senate Bill 386**

### *County Boards of Education - Student Members - Voting Rights and Participation in Executive Sessions*

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment  
Committee

Date: February 7, 2024

From: Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** SB 386. This bill would extend broad voting rights to all student members of local boards of education, essentially overturning the tradition of local autonomy in education decision-making.

Historically, the State has empowered local boards of education to shape the local school system and make decisions that only those at the local level could have the necessary local experience and insight to make. This includes whether to have a student member of the board, and if so, which roles and responsibilities of the local board to extend to the student member, including voting rights.

SB 386 turns this process upside down and extends voting rights to all student members, regardless of the wishes of the local community and local governing bodies. Counties oppose this repeal of local autonomy and decision-making.

Local boards of education have critically important responsibilities. They shape our local education systems, make critical budget and financial choices, and guide the community's approach to schooling. Unequivocally, counties believe that student members have enhanced their local boards of education and have provided important perspectives.

However, county governments have serious concerns about extending voting powers on budget decisions to students. Budgeting in any context – but especially for school funding – is often difficult and complex and requires a certain level of maturity and experience to balance all of the factors, needs, and priorities involved. Maryland is among only a handful of states that fund education through county governments. School funding is by far the largest expenditure for its county governments, and counties take the responsibility very seriously.

Counties have significant and well-founded concerns about the prospect set forth in SB 386 of high school students – who are potentially underage and unable to even vote in Maryland elections – having voting power over the largest portion of a county's operating budget. For these reasons, MACo **OPPOSES** SB 386 and urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report.



# **SB 386.Student Board Members Mandated Reforms.pdf**

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: UNF

**BILL:** Senate Bill 386  
**TITLE:** County Boards of Education - Student Members - Voting Rights and Participation in Executive Sessions  
**DATE:** February 7, 2024  
**POSITION:** OPPOSE  
**COMMITTEE:** Education, Energy, and the Environment  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes Senate Bill 386, a bill to impose mandated changes in the composition of local boards of education and the roles of student board members.

MABE recognizes that student members of local boards provide valuable insights and perspectives on school board policy matters and enjoy a range of voting rights across the 24 jurisdictions. However, the composition, compensation, and other provisions governing the operation of each of Maryland's 24 local boards of education are contained in separate sections of the Education Article. As with other inherently local matters, proposed amendments to these laws are appropriately considered by the General Assembly in a manner that confers local courtesy on the jurisdiction requesting or subject to the proposed legislation. In this context, MABE strongly opposes this legislation which would impose a comprehensive set of reforms impacting almost every local board.

Specifically, Senate Bill 386 would make dramatic changes to the membership status and voting rights of student board members. Again, MABE firmly believes that the scope of the roles and responsibilities of students, as members or non-members of local boards, should remain within the purview of each local board and subject to local discretion as to the types of reforms to be adopted over time.

Local boards are at the helm with their local superintendents making funding and policy decisions that are aligned with state performance and accountability standards, including the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The role of student voices in informing these decisions is critically important, regardless of the legal status and scope of voting rights of a student member of the local board. In Maryland, this locally driven process has already placed us in the vanguard among all other states regarding the membership and voting privileges provided to many student board members. MABE urges the rejection of the approach taken in Senate Bill 386, in favor of the incremental, locally developed revisions to state law that have resulted in an expanded range of voting rights for student members of local boards of education.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 386.