

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.