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*Legislative District 3*  
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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