

Justin Meszler
House Ways and Means Committee
February 2nd, 2024

Dear Chair Atterbeary and members of the committee:

My name is Justin Meszler, and I am writing to support House Bill 373. I am nineteen years old and was born in Gaithersburg, Maryland. I am also a Senior Advisor at [Voters of Tomorrow](#), a Gen Z-run nonprofit organization seeking to engage, empower, and represent young people in politics and government.

Students are the primary stakeholders in our education. The decisions made by county boards of education have the most tangible impacts on the young people in our classrooms. Amidst rhetoric around parents and teachers and politicians, the student voice is too often ignored.

A [2010 study](#) found that American sixteen and seventeen-year-olds possess similar levels of neurological development to voting-eligible young people, and evidence in practice from Austria highlights their [similar quality](#) in vote choice compared to adults. When young people are afforded meaningful power, we use it wisely.

This bill asserts the importance of democracy at the local level. Young people's participation in these elections will have powerful, rippling effects to improve my generation's civic participation and democratic values. When young people see elected leaders and local governments working for them, they are less cynical and more likely to participate in the electoral process later down the road.

We can foster an environment of civic engagement and learning by enabling sixteen and seventeen-year-olds the opportunity to participate in our democratic process at the local level.

Thank you for hearing this vital issue, and your consideration is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Justin Meszler
Senior Advisor, [Voters of Tomorrow](#)