



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: HB 532** | Education – Driver’s Education Assistance Grant Program – Established

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Members of the Ways and Means 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.

**HB 532** supports the ongoing progress of making driving education accessible for *all* students across Maryland. Learning to drive is critical, yet it’s a privilege that many students across the state do not have as a result of the financial barriers to driver's education. Driving, especially for those who live in rural counties without public transportation, is becoming more of a necessity for students to make it to school, work, or handle tasks that support their family such as picking up younger siblings. Moreover, as a result of financial barriers and the varying transportation options across the state, students are being disproportionately affected by the issue of funding for driver’s education. Relying on public transportation is not reliable or time efficient for a student who has to get to work, school, and other necessary places. One bus being late or not coming could mean not making it to work or school on time. One breakdown of the bus or another public means of transportation could mean a lost opportunity or a sibling not being picked up. In this day and age, driving is becoming more of a requirement for jobs and to get around rather than a need. Additionally, it is the school system’s responsibility to educate and equip students with skills that will aid them in their future, like driver education. Changing times call for legislation that supports students' future success and their ability to support themselves.

**HB 532** provides grants for schools with students and communities who need financial support. Furthermore, this bill focuses on schools and school systems that are statistically underprivileged, allowing more equitable support for students who are not able to obtain their Learner’s Permit due to financial barriers.



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This legislation not only emphasizes the importance of driver education, but also provides more equitable support for the students of Maryland. The Council has voted in favor of endorsing **HB 532**, as it aligns with the Council's Legislative Platform supporting:

- a. Providing specialized educational opportunities and accommodations to meet every student's individual needs and abilities (Article III. Clause B) and;
- b. Funding for and full utilization of up-to-date technology and educational resources for the classroom (Article III. Clause C).

**HB 532** moves to create equal opportunities for *all* young Marylanders and ensures they have the resources to succeed post-education. The Council believes it the duty of the Maryland General Assembly to pass legislation that will elevate, protect, and advance the youth of our, and future, generations. For these reasons, the Council supports **HB 532** 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 be "G. Minakowski", written in a cursive style.

Grace Minakowski, Chair  
Maryland Youth Advisory Council