

JOE VOGEL
Legislative District 17
Montgomery County

Ways and Means Committee

Subcommittees

Education

Revenues



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 224
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3103 · 301-858-3103
800-492-7122 Ext. 3103
Joe.Vogel@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB373: Election Law - Voting Age - Board of Education Elections

House Ways and Means Committee

Tuesday, February 6, 2024 1:00PM

Madam Chair, Madam Vice Chair, and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

County Boards of Education are a critical component of our public education infrastructure, establishing the vision and direction of the school system by providing oversight, policy, and community engagement. As a result, County Boards of Education have an outsized role in influencing the day-to-day experience of the students they represent. It is imperative that students have a voice in their Board of Education and a role in the decision-making of their future.

The majority of members of county Boards of Education are decided by vote in Maryland's elections. As students are primarily under 18 years old, they are not able to participate and are left with little say on a matter that directly affects their education and their future. Although each county has a Student Member of the Board as established by the Annotated Code, only two counties give student members full voting rights: Anne Arundel County and Montgomery County. It is important to note that student members are vastly outnumbered by board members who were not elected by students. This diminishes the students' voice on the board and, consequently, in shaping their education.

To address this disparity in representation, HB373 would create a constitutional amendment to:

- 1) Provide the authority of a County to lower the age at which an individual may vote in an election for members of an elected county Board of Education.
- 2) Authorize that individuals in the county which are registered to vote in may vote in an election for members of an elected county board of education, and
- 3) Affirm that a county may enact a law that allows an individual that is at least 16 years of age to vote in an election for members of an elected county board of education, which would give every highschooler a voice in their education and their future.

It is an honor to have Councilmembers across the state, Board members of the Maryland Youth Advisory Council and countless students, parents, and teachers in support of this bill. I am proud to expand students' input in their County Boards of Education to ensure that membership reflects the character, values, and concerns of the bright individuals in our public schools.

I urge the committee to give a favorable report on HB373.