

Hello, everyone. My name is Will Androne, and I am a junior at Severna Park High School. I serve as Anne Arundel County's Regional Director for Vote16MD as well as the Civic Engagement Coordinator for the Chesapeake Regional Association of Student Councils, or CRASC.

I am writing today to support HB0052, which would lower the voting age to 16 in County Board of Education elections. This bill is critical in addressing and enhancing the youth's lack of civic engagement.

As someone who has worked to encourage youth to become more civically engaged and register 16 and 17-year-olds in voter registration drives, I constantly hear the argument, "Well, I can't vote, so why should I care"? This mindset is detrimental, leading to underrepresentation, missed opportunities to develop critical skills, community disengagement, and vulnerability to misinformation, not to mention decreased voter turnout in the future, as youth aren't empowered to build voting habits early.

We need to empower our youth to exercise their civic rights and responsibilities. By lowering the voting age to 16 in county Board of Education elections, we will enhance civic engagement for the youth, help them build voting habits early, strengthen their civic education, foster community engagement, and close participation gaps in civics.

A vote for HB0052 is one for a strong and equitable youth electorate who feel empowered to perform their civic duty and work together to improve their county, state, and nation.

Thank you.