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House of Delegates Ways & Means Committee

**Testimony in Support of HB0052 Election Law - Voting Age - Board of Education Elections
(Your School, Your Voice Act)**

**Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Honorable Members of the Ways & Means
Committee,**

My name is Genie Massey and I am an educator and a parent of three in Washington County. I urge the committee to report favorably on this bill, which allows counties to lower the voting age for school board elections. This legislation strengthens democracy, empowers youth, and fosters lifelong civic engagement.

By age 16, young people possess the reasoning skills needed to participate meaningfully in elections. Voting provides an immediate, practical application of their education. Research shows that 16- and 17-year-olds are as capable as older voters of making informed decisions.

Students are directly impacted by school board policies, from curriculum to facilities. Including their voices in these elections ensures decisions better reflect the needs and experiences of the student body, creating a more representative and equitable system.

Voting is a habit. Allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in school board elections helps establish a lifelong practice of civic engagement. Data from jurisdictions like Takoma Park and Hyattsville, Maryland, show that young voters participate at higher rates than many older age groups when given the opportunity.

When young people are included in civic processes, communities benefit from their energy, insights, and innovative perspectives. Empowering students to vote sends a strong message that their voices matter and strengthens their connection to their community.

The *Your School, Your Voice Act* is a forward-thinking proposal that reflects Maryland's commitment to democracy, education, and civic participation. By empowering counties to extend the right to vote in school board elections to 16- and 17-year-olds, we can strengthen our democracy, build inclusive communities, and foster a new generation of engaged citizens.

I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB0052. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Genie O. Massey