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TESTIMONY ON HB#/0052- POSITION: FAVORABLE

Election Law - Voting Age - Board of Education Elections (Your School, Your Voice Act)

TO: Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and members of the Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#/0052, **Election Law - Voting Age - Board of Education Elections (Your School, Your Voice Act)**

In Maryland, within the 24 counties and the city of Baltimore, only Somerset and Wicomico counties have no student representative on their Board of Education. The Maryland State Board of Education has established the following High School America Government Framework:

High School American government provides Maryland students with the opportunity to learn the Constitutional framework and democratic process that structure the State and national political system. **American Government establishes a knowledge base which supports the development of skills needed for citizens in a participatory democracy.** Effective citizens possess a clear understanding of government: its structure, its purposes, and its processes. They gather, communicate, and utilize information in order to evaluate the competing goals and varying points of view related to public issues. **Utilizing their knowledge and skills, effective citizens purposely choose to be involved in their political system and exert influence in a participatory democracy.** To assist students in acquiring these skills, the content of the course is arranged around five of the six state social studies standards:

The persons who win election to our School Boards have an outsize impact on the education and lives of the affected high school students. As such, in keeping with the goals of the framework **(emphasis added)** those students should begin their involvement in their local political systems by giving them a voice in the election of Board of Education members.

The goal of this bill is authorizing the General Assembly to provide by suitable enactment 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; authorizing a county to enact a local law that allows an individual who is at least 16 years old to vote in an election for members of an elected county board of education. This will begin the process of submitting the amendment to the Maryland Constitution to the qualified voters of the State for adoption or rejection. The opponents and supporters of this change can then make their case to the voters and the voters will decide if this necessary change becomes law in Maryland.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#/0052.