

HB0052 - Unfavorable

Honorable Delegates

I strongly disagree with the proposal to allow children under the age of 18 to vote in School Board Elections.

I disagree that they are the major stakeholders in the education of our youth, and thus should be allowed to vote for those who set education policy and budgets. Instead, I believe their parents and other tax-paying adults are the stakeholders. As parents we should decide who best represents our values for setting school policy and spending. As tax payers and property owners, even if we do not have school aged children, we know that having good schools in our neighborhoods helps keep our property values from declining.

I find it difficult to understand that some members of the General Assembly believe that students younger than 18 would be responsible enough to vote for these important positions even though they do not consider them responsible enough to make informed decisions concerning the purchase of property, guns, legal drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, or tattoos.

Moreover, in the realm of crime and punishment, the General Assembly has passed bills inferring that those under 18 should not be held fully responsible for serious crimes such as car jacking, robbery, and murder because they are not mature enough or too impulsive at that age to know the full consequences of their actions.

I am also concerned about the influence that some teachers may have on the voting decisions the students would make. Some teachers may see this as an opportunity to increase participation in the school board election (possibly via homework assignments or extra credit) and to persuade their students to vote for the school board candidates that they support.

I believe most of the Counties have a student member on the local Board of Education. Although only the Anne Arundel County student has full voting powers, the students through their Student Government Association process could make their educational interests known to their student representative and adult members on the Board.

Please enter an Unfavorable decision for HB0052

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