

To Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

I am a junior at a public high school in Maryland. I am writing to respectfully express my support for HB531. STEM education has permeated my life since elementary school, and I've seen firsthand how programs in public schools have nurtured and supported my fellow students and myself. Currently, I'm the president-elect and serving as the tournament chair of the national math honor society chapter at my school, as well as a captain of our math team. My participation in math and physics competitions and my leadership in student STEM activities have thoroughly convinced me that this bill would be a meaningful step for Maryland's education system

In organizing STEM events, I have experienced directly how much commitment these programs require from students, teachers, and families. I also have friends and classmates involved in robotics competitions, and I've seen how seriously they prepare and work with their team. While athletics often have established funding, official "Varsity" recognition, and structured support, many outstanding STEM programs, such as robotics, are reliant on the extra time of teachers and support from families. This gap in support can make it harder for rigorous STEM programs to grow and remain sustainable.

HB531 is an important step forward because it recognizes that competitive STEM is also serious, team-based work. The focus on robotics in this bill provides a great starting point for Maryland to study how schools can better recognize and support STEM and robotics activities. By studying the feasibility of varsity-level programs, this bill opens an important conversation about how Maryland can better support academic excellence in STEM.

Students who build, solve, compete, and innovate deserve to be seen, encouraged, and supported. I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB531.

Sincerely,
Joe Li
Maryland High School Student