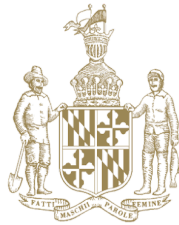


JHEANELLE WILKINS
Legislative District 20
Montgomery County

Chair, Ways and Means Committee

Rules and Executive Nominations
Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 131
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3493
800-492-7122 Ext. 3493
Jheanelle.Wilkins@house.maryland.gov

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

APRIL 7, 2026

House Bill 575 - Public Schools – Student Attendance – Excused Absences for Civic Engagement

Dear colleagues,

I am pleased to present **House Bill 575 – Public Schools – Student Attendance – Excused Absences for Civic Engagement**, legislation that affirms civic participation is a vital part of student learning and ensures the youth of Maryland are not penalized academically for engaging in our democratic process.

HB 575 requires that Maryland State Department of Education and local school boards treat student absences as excused when students testify before the Maryland General Assembly. The bill limits these excused absences to up to 15 hours or two school days and ensures these absences are lawful and excluded from chronic absenteeism statistics.

HB 575 addresses an existing gap observed within Maryland’s schools with civic absences depending on district discretion. HB 575 establishes a consistent, statewide standard so that civic engagement is accessible to all students, not solely those whose schools already offer flexibility or accommodations.

Research consistently shows that early involvement in civic participation increases sustained engagement in voting and community leadership. To build a stronger, more representative democracy, we must empower our youth to engage in civic participation without fear of academic consequences. House Bill 575 ensures that Maryland students can learn democracy by embodying its essence in practice.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to give a **favorable report** for **House Bill 575 – Public Schools – Student Attendance – Excused Absences for Civic Engagement**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jheanelle Wilkins".

Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins