

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the committee,  
My name is Paula Seabright and I am the co-chair of the Women's Giving Circle of Howard County's Grants Committee. As I mentioned a couple weeks ago, I am also the chair of the Young Women's Giving Circle intern program. Our 10 high school interns learn about philanthropy, collective giving, leadership and advocacy through supporting our organization's efforts to impact period poverty.

As I stated in my previous testimony before this committee, the Women's Giving Circle believes that one of the most important parts of philanthropic work is our ability to raise awareness about issues to people in positions to facilitate change. I wish I could have brought some of my interns with me today to share their experiences testifying here at the MDGA, at the board of education, and at the county council. Unfortunately, most of them have used up discretionary absences with family gatherings, college tours, and other extracurricular activities.

That's why this bill is so important. In Howard county schools fifth graders learn about the constitution and a bit about the legislative process in their Simulated Congressional Hearings. They speak to a panel of community leaders about issues related to one article of the bill of rights. We use Socratic seminars in GT and AP classes. We emphasize the importance of critical thinking and analysis. The state requires students to log 75 service learning hours to graduate. We educate our kids to be civically engaged. But we don't give them time to do that. Giving students 15 hours of excused absences so they can show up for issues that are important to them and their peers would benefit not just them, but our elected bodies. Whitney Houston said it best "I believe that children are our future. Teach them well and let them show the way." Your favorable vote for HB575 would help do that.

Thank you,  
Paula Seabright  
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