

TESTIMONY FOR SB535

FROM ABBY CHAN, AACPL STUDENT TRUSTEE

Thank you, Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the committee. My name is Abby Chan and I'm a junior at Crofton High School. I am also the student member of the Anne Arundel County Public Library Board of Trustees.

As the student member, I serve as an advocate for youth in my library system. My position ensures that students' perspectives are heard and brought to the forefront of the library's governing body. In our system, I have full voting rights and serve as an equal among my fellow board members.

Before student members were included on library boards, decisions that impact youth were often made with only adult voices at the table. While those perspectives are important, students experience libraries in different ways. Having a student member ensures that those real experiences are represented when decisions are made.

In my role, I've been able to testify at town hall on behalf of District 7's library system, speaking from a youth perspective on the need for increased funding that shared how young people rely on library spaces daily and how expanded funding would support more programs or resources that students depend on.

As both a student and a library trustee, I've also helped bridge my school and our local library to create a nearly entirely student-led Lunar New Year festival, just last Saturday. Working closely with both library staff and students, we organized performances, cultural activities, and community outreach that ultimately brought over 200+ attendees and gave each student the opportunity to lead and share their heritage in our community.

Overall, having a student member benefits the entire library system. It helps boards better understand youth needs and how decisions about spaces and resources affect students across our county. It also helps strengthen connections with schools and brings fresh ideas into discussions. For students, it provides leadership experience, builds civic engagement, and shows young people that their voices matter.

Students aren't just library users—they are partners in shaping the future of our libraries. This bill would ensure that more students like me across Maryland have the opportunity to contribute, lead, and bring their perspectives into decisions that affect them.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my experience, and I respectfully urge a favorable report on this bill.