
TO: Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment

BILL: House Bill (HB) 0575- Public Schools - Student Attendance - Excused Absences for Civic Engagement

DATE: April 7, 2026

POSITION: Support

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) extend their support for HB0575 - Public Schools - Student Attendance - Excused Absences for Civic Engagement with amendments.

MSDE strongly affirms the importance of creating meaningful opportunities for students to engage with the Maryland General Assembly. When students step into legislative spaces, they do more than observe democracy; they participate in it. Their perspectives enrich policy discussions, particularly on matters affecting education and youth wellbeing. We commend this bill for establishing a structure that ensures all students across the State may lend their voices, share their experiences, and engage directly with legislators without the consequence of an unexcused absence.

The State Board and MSDE appreciate the amendments put forward by the sponsor to preserve the integrity and consistency of how chronic absenteeism is calculated statewide. Maintaining alignment with the federal definition, and a neutral, consistent calculation, ensures that Maryland's attendance data remains uniform across the State and comparable with other states nationwide, as well as over time. This approach supports a shared understanding of student attendance patterns while preserving the ability to accurately assess and address missed instructional time, even as the State expands opportunities for civic engagement.

MSDE appreciates the opportunity to provide input on this legislation and looks forward to continued partnership with the General Assembly during implementation. The Department stands ready to provide additional guidance and support to local education agencies as needed to ensure successful and consistent application of the law.

For further details, please contact Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of Government Affairs, at laurel.cratsley@maryland.gov.