

**HB0531 - Senate\_FAV\_MTC\_Pub. Schools STEM & Roboti**

Uploaded by: Drew Vetter

Position: FAV



Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

April 7, 2026

House Bill 531 – *State Department of Education –  
Public Schools STEM and Robotics Program – Study*

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

The Maryland Tech Council (MTC), with over 800 members, is the State's largest association of technology companies. Our vision is to propel Maryland to be the country's number one innovation economy for life sciences and technology. MTC brings the State's life sciences and technology communities into a single, united organization that empowers members to achieve their goals through advocacy, networking, and education. On behalf of MTC, we submit this letter of **support** for House Bill 531.

House Bill 531 creates a study to evaluate how science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and robotics programs can be expanded and strengthened across the State's public schools. Expanding access to these programs will enhance STEM education pathways and better align classroom learning with the skills required in today's technologically driven economy. Competitive robotics and related programs provide hands-on experiences that develop critical competencies in engineering, coding, and collaborative problem-solving. Early exposure to these disciplines can meaningfully increase student interest in pursuing post-secondary education and careers in technical fields, reinforcing Maryland's STEM talent pipeline into the workforce. By studying robotics programs and competitive STEM structures, House Bill 531 helps identify ways to produce future engineers, developers, and tech-savvy graduates.

The study established by House Bill 531 promotes statewide consistency and encourages equitable access to high-quality STEM programming. This method ensures that future policy decisions are informed by data and best practices, and reflects sound stewardship and thoughtful planning for young, motivated students in Maryland's public school system. For these reasons, MTC requests a favorable report on House Bill 531.

**For more information call:**

Andrew G. Vetter  
J. Steven Wise  
Danna L. Kauffman  
Christine K. Krone  
410-244-7000

# HB0531EthanXu\_fav.pdf

Uploaded by: Ethan Xu

Position: FAV



## **FRC 8726 Cryptohawks**

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and Environment,

We, **FRC 8726 Cryptohawks**, would like to request a report **in favor** of HB0531 — State Department of Education - Public Schools STEM and Robotics Program - Study. We compete in an organization called FIRST® Robotics Competition (FRC), an international program where thousands of high school students, aided by mentors, teachers, and sponsors, work together to build and compete with industrial-sized robots against other robots from around the world. FRC combines the rigors of STEM with the excitement of sports to develop the technical and professional skills of future STEM leaders.

FRC CryptoHawks 8726, as a team, is a primarily student-supported, school-based FRC team in Frederick County that aims to bring advanced STEM education opportunities to areas with historically minimal STEM programs. Through FRC, we have been able to provide the rigor, the excitement, and the hands-on experience that the core curriculum lacks. These values have been our main driving force when it comes to hosting yearly FIRST Lego League events or STEM outreach events.

Through the MSDE Robotics grant, numerous robotics teams like ours have been helped. However, only 85% of the 200+ high school teams with a robotics team are being underserved. Many football teams or athletic teams have travel, and coaching stipends covered or at least partially covered, teams like ourselves need to be 100% fundraised. There is still work to be done here.

In our own surveys, 100% of our alumni have gone on to pursue STEM majors at prestigious institutions, including the University of Maryland, the University of California, Irvine, Cornell University, the University of Pennsylvania, and Georgia Tech. In a study done at the Brandeis Heller School for Social Policy and Management, 63% of FIRST alumni worked in the stem workforce compared to 43% not in FIRST. It is proven that FIRST alumni are 1.4 times more likely to pursue STEM careers. 61% of FIRST participants majored in either Engineering, as compared to just 26% in the general people.

HB0531 is a step in the right direction to support robotics and STEM teams throughout the state. Historically, the barrier-to-entry for FRC and other STEM teams has been very high. For FRC, It takes about \$20,000 a year to cover expenses. This includes \$10,000 a year for FIRST registration, with the rest being for tools, machinery, metal stock, and travel. FRC teams like ours run primarily on sponsorships from different organizations in order to cover our expenses. Currently being primarily student run with minimal school support, it is difficult for many teams to be able to handle these finances alone.

The impact of Robotics and STEM programs do wonders to support the future development of STEM in Maryland. Students participating in FIRST are able to support their community. Throughout our team,

there are many members who mentor their own elementary robotics teams. This kind of impact compounds and one day once those kids grow up maybe they will grow to mentor their own teams. Robotics and STEM programs build a community and tradition of STEM developments where we support each other. To keep on that mission we need support from our state too. We hope that this study will help understand how Maryland can reduce the barrier-to-entry for other FRC and STEM teams. That Maryland, through this task force, can provide the support for the students interested in STEM to be able to access incredible STEM programs like FRC.

Thank you for your time,

Ethan Xu, Eric Jiang, Aashritha Amirineni, Saanvi Kakarla  
**FRC 8726 Crpytohawks**

# **HB531 Written Testimony - Joe Li.pdf**

Uploaded by: Joe Li

Position: FAV

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

# **HB0531 - crossfiled bill - FAV - STEM and Robotics**

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

HB0531\_Cross-filed\_Bill

RichardKaplowitz\_FAV

04/07/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz  
Frederick, MD 21703

**TESTIMONY ON CROSS-FILED BILL HB#0531- POSITION:**  
**FAVORABLE**

**Public Schools STEM and Robotics Program Task Force – Establishment**

**TO:** Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of cross-filed bill HB#0531, **Public Schools STEM and Robotics Program Task Force – Establishment**

I submitted testimony on the cross-filed bill version heard in your chamber. That was bill SB0990 did not receive a hearing in the Senate Rules committee. This is the crossover bill from the other chamber HB0531. I urge you to support this bill which passed the House with amendments by the vote of 125-7. Please reconcile these bills and pass them in both chambers after a favorable vote in your committee.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on cross-filed bill HB#0531.**

**HB0531- State Board & MSDE- LOI 4.7.26.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Yvonne Harper

Position: INFO

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

**BILL:** House Bill (HB) 0531: Public Schools STEM and Robotics Program Task Force - Establishment

**DATE:** April 07, 2026

**POSITION:** Letter of Information

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The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) are providing information regarding House Bill 531 - *Public Schools STEM and Robotics Program Task Force – Establishment*, which requires MSDE to study existing extracurricular STEM and robotics programming in the State, the operational and fiscal resources needed to run these programs, and the feasibility and practicality of implementing competitive, statewide STEM and robotics programs, including consideration of designating competitive robotics as a varsity sport in all public high schools. The final study and report with recommendations regarding statewide competitive STEM programming is due on January 1, 2027.

The Department currently administers the Maryland Robotics Grant Program, which distributes approximately \$350,000 annually to expand access to robotics education across the State, and maintains multi-year subgrantee and programmatic data. This existing data may help shed light on some of the proposed topics of study. Existing funding supports 30 grantees, including 11 local education agencies (LEAs) and 4 non-profit organizations, and reaches over 30 high schools, 12 middle schools, and 45 elementary schools.

The study required in HB 531 will involve significant data analysis, external research, and stakeholder engagement to produce meaningful recommendations at the State and LEA level. Given the current timeline and without additional resources, MSDE may face challenges in fully meeting these expectations. Additional funding or extended time would help ensure that the study produces recommendations that are both practical and reflective of statewide priorities and local needs.

MSDE and LEAs continue to prioritize providing robust and varied extracurricular programming to Maryland students across the STEM disciplines, including computer science, engineering, environmental science, and chemistry, among others. MSDE recognizes that a statewide analysis of STEM and robotics programs may provide valuable insight into program access, best practices, and opportunities for growth, and that expanding programs would allow more students to engage in STEM. For further information, please contact Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of Government Affairs, at [Laurel.Cratsley@maryland.gov](mailto:Laurel.Cratsley@maryland.gov).