

**Testimony in support of HB0586: County Boards of Library Trustees – Student Member**

**House Ways and Means Committee**

**February 23, 2026**

**Submitted by Dana Newman, Talbot County Free Library, Director**

Dear Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

The Talbot County Free Library (TCFL) supports HB0586: County Boards of Library Trustees – Student Member, authorizing county library boards to include a student member. We are grateful for the sponsor’s inclusion of permissive language that allows local boards to determine whether and how to appoint a student member. This flexibility upholds the principles of local governance by enabling each board to establish a selection process that reflects its community and policy priorities. Moreover, permitting boards to appoint a student member through a locally defined process facilitates meaningful and appropriate student participation while maintaining the oversight of responsibilities entrusted to local governing bodies.

At TCFL, we consistently engage teens in ways that elevate their perspectives and strengthen our services including by having two non-voting teen/student representatives on our Board of Trustees who regularly share their perspectives and report out on activities both in the school system as well as how they can help with programming at the library. In addition, we hold regular teen programs where not only do teens enjoy programs where they are able to have fun, learn, and socialize, but where they regularly provide feedback on what the library can do to better serve them. For example, at the last teen program, teens at the Easton branch contributed ideas to what the new teen area should look like. Student teens are also involved as teens during the summer reading program, help to run book clubs for younger teens and run a regular STEM camp in the summer. Teens have also recently taken the library's strategic planning survey to help give input into what the library should do to improve or add to services and programs for teens.

We appreciate that HB0586 is entirely permissive, preserving local discretion and allowing each county to determine whether adding a student member aligns with its governance structure. At TCFL, we have found that having a teen representative on the Board allows for good discussion on what may impact students. Thank you for your consideration and for your continued support of Maryland’s public libraries.

Sincerely,

Dana Newman