

HB 575: Public Schools - Student Attendance - Excused Absences for Civic Engagement: Please advocate **TO OPPOSE** this bill.

Dear Ways & Means Committee:

I am writing to respectfully, **strongly oppose HB 575**, concerning *Public Schools – Student Attendance – Excused Absences for Civic Engagement*.

Civic engagement is important, and students should absolutely learn about government, public policy, and community involvement. However, **creating additional categories of excused absences** for activities that may be broadly defined or politically oriented **risks undermining consistent attendance standards and the primary mission of our schools—education**.

Regular classroom attendance is critical to academic success, particularly as Maryland continues working to address learning loss and achievement gaps. Expanding excused absences for civic engagement activities may unintentionally encourage students to miss valuable instructional time, placing additional strain on teachers and disrupting classroom continuity. Schools should remain focused on providing balanced civic education within the classroom rather than facilitating absences tied to external advocacy activities.

Students can engage civically through structured school programs such as student government, service-learning projects, and curriculum-based activities that occur without sacrificing instructional time. Politics should not be a focus at our schools, except possibly within a political science class or something similar, and if so, **ALL** political views and opinions should be taught and accepted.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to **oppose HB 575**.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,

Trudy Tibbals