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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 25, 2026

Testimony in Favor of HB0586
County Boards of Library Trustees – Membership – Student Member

Chair Wilkins, Vice-Chair Feldmark, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

I respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 586 to formally authorize library systems across Maryland to appoint student members to their respective boards.

Libraries are among the most trusted and utilized public institutions in our communities. They are not only places for books, but hubs for workforce development, after-school learning, digital access, civic engagement, and community gathering. For many young people, libraries are an introduction to public service, leadership, and lifelong learning.

Outside of my role in the General Assembly, I have had the privilege of serving on the Board of Trustees for the Anne Arundel County Public Library system — a position I began prior to joining the House. Under its existing unique statutory authority, Anne Arundel County has already taken the initiative to appoint a student member to its board (SMOB). Our SMOB has been a valuable addition to all library-related matters and has directly incorporated student voices into governance decisions that affect programming, outreach, and services for young residents.

House Bill 586 simply provides clarity and statewide authorization for other library systems to do the same. We have been in conversations with MAPLA throughout the course of the drafting of this legislation, and while originally we wanted to make this a requirement, we have instead drafted the legislation as an authorization. We have commitments from library advocacy organizations that our library systems will be educated on the benefits of SMOB's and I believe will allow for the creation of a variety of student member positions.

If we believe in cultivating the next generation of civic leaders, we should create pathways for participation. Providing students with a seat at the table strengthens transparency, broadens perspective, and reinforces the role of libraries as inclusive community institutions.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask for a favorable report on House Bill 586.