



HOWARD COUNTY
LIBRARY SYSTEM

Learn. Grow. Connect.

Testimony in support of HB0586: County Boards of Library Trustees – Student Member
House Ways and Means Committee
February 23, 2026
Submitted by Tonya Aikens, Howard County Library System President & CEO

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

I respectfully express support for **HB0586: County Boards of Library Trustees – Student Member**, which authorizes 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 responsibilities entrusted to local governing bodies.

At Howard County Library System, we consistently engage teens in ways that elevate their perspectives and strengthen our services:

- **Teen Advisory Boards:** Each branch convenes a Teen Advisory Board that meets monthly to provide input on library collections, programs, and services.
- **Systemwide Teen Programming:** We offer a coordinated schedule of classes and activities across all branches—self-directed, peer-led, and staff-facilitated—available after school hours at least four days per week.
- **Collaborative Space Design:** In preparation for the expansion of teen space at our Elkridge Branch, more than 140 teens are participating in an internship program to co-design a compassion-centered, 9,000-square-foot area specifically 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.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued support of Maryland’s public libraries.

Sincerely,

Tonya Aikens,
President & CEO