



# MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

*Expanding Opportunity and Unleashing Potential*

15 West Gude Drive ♦ Suite 100 ♦ Rockville, Maryland 20850

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**BILL:** House Bill 575

**TITLE:** Public Schools - Student Attendance - Excused Absences for Civic Engagement

**DATE:** February 18, 2026

**POSITION:** Support with Amendment

**COMMITTEE:** Ways and Means

**CONTACT:** Patricia Ursprung, Coordinator, Legislative Affairs

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The Montgomery County Board of Education (Board) supports House Bill 575, with recommended amendments.

This bill would require the Maryland State Department of Education and local education agencies (LEAs) to adopt an attendance policy that permits student absences that occur in order to participate in certain civic engagement activities to be excused absences.

On August 21, 2025, the Montgomery County Board of Education adopted a legislative platform that contains priority issues and ongoing concerns. One of the ongoing concerns is being able to develop students who are future ready. This means, students will be able to demonstrate proficiency in skills and knowledge they need to adapt, lead, and make meaningful contributions to their communities. Being proficient in, and having practice in the area of, civic engagement falls into this goal.

The Board's support for this important goal and life skill – being an effective advocate – is why the Board believes this opportunity to participate in civic engagement should not be limited to activities during a regular session of the general assembly. Opportunities for civic engagement extend beyond the ninety days the general assembly is in session, and so the option of an excused absence to participate in them should likewise be available year-round. Amending the bill to expand the types of civic engagement that qualify would better align with the Board's support of this important learning opportunity.

While the Board believes that providing the opportunity for students to participate in civic engagement is undeniably important, so is being physically present in school and available to receive instruction. School systems in Maryland, and across the country, are working to limit chronic absenteeism because of the negative impact it has on student learning. As a result,



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increasing the number of legal, or “excused” absence opportunities for students can present a concern. As a result, the Board also suggests amending the bill to limit the number of excused absences that can be granted based on civic engagement as much as possible, or limit the availability of the civic engagement absence to only students who otherwise comply with certain attendance requirements.

As a result of these competing interests, and based on the Board’s adopted platform, the Montgomery County Board of Education supports House Bill 575 with the inclusion of the amendments recommended herein.