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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Senate Bill 535 – County Boards of Library Trustees – Membership – Student Member

April 1, 2026

Madame Chair and Members of the Ways & Means Committee:

Our public libraries are far more than a place to get a book. Libraries are community centers that serve as places of learning, professional development, healthcare, human interaction, access, intellectual freedom, and so much more. Libraries are free public spaces that allow everyone to feel safe and to find opportunity. And for many young people, libraries are a space to foster civic engagement, reduce social inequalities and encourage leadership and life-long learning.

Senate Bill 535 will take the idea of encouraging leadership a step further by authorizing county boards of library trustees to allow for the selection of a student member. The bill does not require local boards to add a student member, but it sets the framework should a board decide to move in that direction, while leaving the process up to the local boards.

By incorporating student voices into governance decisions that affect programming, outreach, and services for young residents, we will be cultivating the next generation of civic leaders. 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 request a favorable report on Senate Bill 535.