

**BILL:** House Bill 629  
**TITLE:** County Boards of Education – Student Member – Voting  
**DATE:** February 5, 2021  
**POSITION:** OPPOSE  
**COMMITTEE:** Ways and Means  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes House Bill 629, a bill to prohibit a student member of a local board of education from casting a deciding vote.

The composition, compensation, and other provisions governing the operation of each of Maryland's 24 local boards of education are contained in the Education Article. As with other inherently local matters, proposed amendments to these laws are appropriately considered by the General Assembly in a manner that confers local courtesy on the jurisdiction requesting or subject to the proposed legislation. In this context, MABE strongly opposed this legislation which would impose a uniform restriction on the status of a student board members' vote on their respective local board. Again, MABE firmly believes that these matters should remain within the purview of each local board.

Student members of local boards provide valuable insights and perspectives on school board policy matters and enjoy a range of voting rights across the 24 jurisdictions. MABE believes the successful development and implementation of state laws, including the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Act, relies on the governance role of local boards in advancing equity and excellence for all students through locally adopted educational policies and budgets allocating limited resources. To the extent that a student board member has voting rights as described in the Education Article, MABE opposes unduly limiting or restricting their voting rights as proposed in this legislation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has tested the mettle of each of Maryland's 24 local boards by imposing unforeseeable hardships on students, families, teachers, and communities. Local boards are at the helm with their local superintendents making funding and policy decisions that are aligned with available state health and educational recovery standards and informed by ongoing community engagement. Again, to the extent that local provisions of state law already empower students with voting rights, now is not the time to impose a limitation on the value of the student member's voice or vote.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 629.