

BILL: House Bill 797
TITLE: County Boards of Education – Student Membership – Alterations
DATE: March 3, 2022
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes House Bill 797, a bill to impose mandated changes in the composition of local boards of education and the roles of student board members.

The composition, compensation, and other provisions governing the operation of each of Maryland's 24 local boards of education are contained in separate sections of 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 opposes this legislation which would impose a comprehensive set of reforms impacting almost every local board. Specifically, House Bill 797 would make dramatic changes to the membership status and voting rights of student board members. Again, MABE firmly believes that these matters should remain within the purview of each local board and subject to local discretion as to the types of reforms to be adopted over time.

Local boards are at the helm with their local superintendents making funding and policy decisions that are aligned with state performance and accountability standards and informed by ongoing community engagement. The role of student voices in informing these divisions is critically important, regardless of the legal status and scope of voting rights of a student member of the 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. And, through incremental, locally developed revisions to state law, local provisions of state law already empower students with voting rights on several local boards.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 797.