

February 3, 2026

To Whom It May Concern:

As President of the Maryland State Board of Education, I currently serve alongside a voting student member. Having also served as a student member myself from 2005 to 2006, I have observed this role from both perspectives and can speak to its function within a mature governance system.

Students have served on the Maryland State Board of Education for more than 40 years. The General Assembly established a student member position in 1985 and, in 1993, extended voting authority to that role. For more than three decades, Maryland has therefore operated with a voting student member as part of the Board's formal decision-making structure.

Importantly, this authority is neither unlimited nor symbolic. Student members vote on all matters considered by the Board in regular session and participate fully in deliberations. State statute clearly delineates a narrow set of closed-session matters—such as personnel actions and collective bargaining—on which student members do not vote. These guardrails have been in place for decades and have supported stable, effective Board operations.

From a governance standpoint, the presence of a voting student member has strengthened—not complicated—the Board's work. Student members contribute a perspective on how policies are experienced at the school level, improving deliberation without undermining fiduciary responsibility, statutory compliance, or institutional accountability. Over time, this structure has proven fully compatible with complex policy development and sensitive decision-making.

Maryland's experience demonstrates that a voting student member can be successfully integrated into state-level education governance when the role is clearly defined in law and embedded within established norms of Board practice. It is a well-tested model that has served Maryland well for decades and one that can deepen the policy process in other states by strengthening deliberation, grounding decisions in lived experience, and reinforcing public trust in education governance.

Sincerely,



Joshua L. Michael, Ph.D.  
President