

MARYLAND ASSOCIATION
OF STUDENT COUNCILS

**LEGISLATIVE
PLATFORM**



Maryland Association of Student Councils (MASC) is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization | mdstudentcouncils.org

MARYLAND'S STUDENT VOICE

SINCE 1950

MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT COUNCILS

MISSION

“MASC shall foster a statewide environment for all secondary school students to express and exchange opinions and ideas, develop leadership skills, and promote student representation and involvement in all groups and organizations impacting the lives of students.”

- Maryland Association of Student Councils Constitution, Article II, Section 1



WHO WE ARE

The Maryland Association of Student Councils is composed of the student governments and student councils of well over 100 high schools and middle schools from all regions in Maryland.

WHAT WE DO

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT & YOUTH COLLABORATION

MASC hosts 3 major conferences every year. Each conference draws hundreds of student leaders from across the state. At conferences, student delegates participate in youth led workshops, learn about statewide issues, and meet and collaborate with other youth. These and other events allow students to develop vital skills including leadership and communication.

We do not condone racism and discrimination in this organization. We strive to not only diversify our members, but educate them on diversity and its importance. In the future, we would like to ensure that every student has the right to respectfully share their views and perspectives without fear of harassment from their peers. We will ensure that every student is heard.

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

During each general session of the Maryland General assembly, MASC takes legislative stances on bills and sends students to Annapolis to advocate before committees and build relationships with their legislators.

STUDENT SERVICE LEARNING

Every year, MASC selects a state charity. Through this connection, MASC uses our membership body of thousands of youth to raise funds, awareness, and support for local charities.



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Legislative Platform

Amended and Approved February 11, 2023

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I. YOUTH REPRESENTATION

As a youth led organization, we see, utilize, and develop the abilities of students. We affirm that young people offer a unique view of the world, are capable of making well-informed decisions, and are a vital demographic. Because of this, we support systems, policy, programs, and instances in which youth and students are given an opportunity to share their opinion and represent their peers.

WE SUPPORT:

- A. Student election of school and regional student government officers.
- B. Student election of one or multiple student members, representatives, and commissioners on state and local Boards of Education with a full official vote.
- C. Development of Superintendent's and Chief Executive's student advisory councils at the school system level, and principals' student advisory councils at the school level.
- D. Appointment, with student input, of student representatives to boards and commissions at both the local and the state level that deal with youth-related issues and concerns.
- E. Allotment of full membership and voting rights for student representatives and members of state and local Boards, panels, commissions, and task forces.
- F. Appointment and fair compensation of advisors to support the empowerment and representation of students.
- G. Establishment of regional student council associations with the support of full-time regional advisors in areas where they do not exist.
- H. Providing students opportunities to speak out about issues that may directly affect them.
- I. Youth involvement in the creation and revision of legislation impacting students.

II. PEER LEADERSHIP

Leadership is a valuable and important skill. As an organization, MASC strives to develop leadership in students. We practice peer leadership as our organization is led by youth, workshops and development courses are taught by youth, and all voting members of our general assembly are students. Because of the success that MASC, school systems, and community organizations have had using peer leadership, we support systems, programs, and instances in which youth and students are given an opportunity to lead and guide their peers.

WE SUPPORT:

- A. Maximizing the use of peer leadership in all student organizations.
- B. Establishing peer counseling, mediation, and tutoring programs in educational institutions.
- C. Youth led school and community service initiatives.
- D. Opportunities for youth to serve in leadership roles in local and state government.



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III. EDUCATION

The Maryland Association of Student Councils is a body composed of individual school and regional student governments, assemblies, congresses, and associations. All voting members of our general assembly are secondary students in Maryland public and private schools. Given the implications of education on students, the community, and the economy- we support systems, programs, policies and instances which improve the quality and impact of education. Given the needs of Maryland public school students and the complexity of providing education, we oppose systems, programs, policies or instances that might detract from or worsen the quality of Maryland public and private schools.

WE SUPPORT:

- A. High standards of learning across the curriculum for all students.
- B. Providing educational opportunities specialized to meet each student's needs and abilities.
- C. Diverse school curricula that allow for specific areas of study.
- D. Updated computer and technology education and textbooks offered to students in all grade levels.
- E. Funding for and full utilization of up-to-date technology and educational resources for the classroom.
- F. Visual and performing art education offered to students in all grade levels.
- G. Early intervention programs to enable all children to start school ready to learn.
- H. Infusing service learning into course curricula and encouraging it outside the classroom.
- I. Maximizing the variety of co-curricular and extracurricular activities offered at all schools.
- J. School based programs and related activities that encourage civic participation.
- K. Making a complete spectrum of courses available to all students (i.e. fundamental, honors, advanced placement, etc.)
- L. Notation of honors, advanced placement, and intensive courses on report cards, high school transcripts, and school course syllabi and allotment of weighted credit for course completion.
- M. Statewide establishment of eligibility requirements for participation in student activities.
- N. Option of early graduation for students meeting the graduation requirements.
- O. Initiatives to encourage youth to stay in school and continue their education.
- P. Initiatives designed to keep college education affordable for Marylanders.
- Q. Programs that keep high achieving secondary school students in Maryland for higher education.
- R. Initiatives that encourage individuals to become teachers in Maryland.
- S. Improvements to staff training, including staff education in anti-racism, and other measures that improve quality and equitability of instruction for students.
- T. Teachers providing instruction only in subjects for which they are qualified.
- U. Equitable funding per student across the state except in the case of special education students, pupils with limited English proficiency and students eligible for free and reduced meals.



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- V. State and federal funds provided for programs mandated by the state and federal governments.
- W. Reduction of class sizes where needed.
- X. Student and faculty dress codes that compliment and improve the learning environment.
- Y. Programs that promote parent/guardian and community involvement in students and schools.
- Z. Lunch subsidies for underprivileged students.
- AA. School systems paying for advanced placement and standardized testing exams.
- BB. Programs that help students improve their college readiness.

WE OPPOSE:

- A. Public funding for private education.
- B. Providing vouchers for use in private schools except in the case of special education or systemic unavailability of a safe learning environment.
- C. Mandating public school uniforms.
- D. The legislating of unfunded statewide curriculum by the state government.

IV. STUDENT SAFETY AND DISCIPLINE

As a statewide coalition of students, we strongly value the safety of our schools. Given the connection between student discipline and safety as well as the educational benefits of safe schools, we support any systems, programs, policies or instances that improve the safety of public and private schools. We oppose the unnecessary or prejudicial disciplining of students.

WE SUPPORT:

- A. Proactive measures to ensure student safety, and to prevent school violence and vandalism.
- B. Inclusion of anger and stress management in school curricula.
- C. Publicized procedures for reporting bullying, assault, or any form of harassment.
- D. Early intervention and prevention programs to help students with behavioral problems.
- E. Efforts to reduce classroom behavioral disruptions in school.
- F. Local school systems establishing standards of behavior for all students.
- G. Publicized progressive discipline programs within all schools.
- H. Parent/guardian involvement in a student's disciplinary procedures.
- I. Alternative educational programs for students facing expulsion or other severe disciplinary actions.
- J. Regular maintenance of school grounds and facilities.
- K. Programs designed to promote positive relationships between youth and law enforcement.



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WE OPPOSE:

- A. Disciplining students in school for out of school behavior.
- B. The searching and drug testing of students based on unsubstantiated rumors.

V. HEALTH AND SOCIAL ISSUES

The Maryland Association of Student Councils is home to some of Maryland's best students and leaders. We see the need for students to lead healthy lives in order to live long, successful lives. Given the communal, economic, and personal benefits of being physically and mentally healthy, we support systems, programs, policies, and instances that improve the health and wellbeing of Marylanders, especially Maryland youth.

WE SUPPORT:

- A. Availability of wellness centers and school health service professionals in all schools, including at least one psychologist in every school.
- B. Efforts to eliminate student use and abuse of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.
- C. Providing education on the biological and social effects of controlled and illegal substances.
- D. Providing all students access to drug counseling.
- E. Initiatives to prevent driving while under the influence of alcohol or other controlled substances.
- F. Maximizing the number of substance free activities offered for students.
- G. Efforts to increase student awareness and prevention of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.
- H. Initiatives designed to promote positive mental health and wellbeing in youth
- I. Training of school staff to recognize mental health issues amongst students and provide support.
- J. Efforts to prevent teen suicide.
- K. Training of all athletic coaches in mandatory concussion protocols.
- L. Full time guidance counselors at all schools proportionate to the school's need.
- M. Reduction of the ratio of students to guidance counselors.
- N. Establishment and utilization of school-based "crisis counselors".
- O. Promoting the National Association of Multicultural Education (NAME) as well as interaction between a wide range of students of different backgrounds in order to improve tolerance and student relationships.
- P. Efforts by student organizations to donate time and money to charitable causes
- Q. Providing education on domestic violence and healthy relationships.
- R. Prioritization of hiring multilingual and multicultural counselors in schools.
- S. Health curricula in all schools that educate comprehensively about mental and emotional health and best nutritional practices.



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VI. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

As the future leaders of our communities and Maryland, we see the need for and benefit of being environmentally conscious of our actions. The Maryland Association of Student Councils values acts of good environmental stewardship and strives to be environmentally friendly. Given the dangers and ramifications of a poorly treated/maintained environment, MASC supports systems, programs, policies, and instances that improve the environmental condition of Maryland. MASC further supports opportunities for students to learn about the environment and take part in environmental service-learning projects.

WE SUPPORT:

- A. Promoting a comprehensive Green Schools Program in Maryland schools.
- B. Practices and instruction that support environmental protection at all schools, such as reducing school energy usage and waste and otherwise limiting schools' carbon footprints.
- C. Maintaining a comprehensive recycling program in all school systems and communities.
- D. Providing student opportunities for environmental education outside the classroom.
- E. Limiting the use of and exposure to harmful chemicals on school property.
- F. State and community initiatives that promote sustainable ecosystems and lifestyles.
- G. The teaching of environmental literacy, pollution control, and national and global conservation strategies in public funded schools

VII. YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC ISSUES

As they relate to the well-being of the economy and the preparation of capable and globally competitive workers, the Maryland Association of Student Councils values opportunities for Maryland students to gain work experience. Further, when observing the costs associated with higher education and continuing education, MASC believes early wage earning and fiscal responsibility is a part of a solid foundation for future financial well-being and affordable higher education. Given the benefits of youth employment and work opportunities, MASC supports systems, programs, policies, and instances that encourage, promote, and assist young people in obtaining work opportunities.

WE SUPPORT:

- A. Opportunities designed to expose youth to the workplace.
- B. Initiatives designed to increase youth employment opportunities.
- C. Secondary school work programs that alleviate the cost of continuing education.
- D. Academic credit for co-curricular employment and internships.
- E. School-based programs designed to introduce and prepare students for future careers and career fields.
- F. Providing student interns with equal workplace protection as their fully employed counterparts.

- G. Initiatives to increase Maryland youth preparedness to function effectively in the workplace.
- H. Fair compensation of employees regardless of age.

Memorandum on Platform Maintenance

This Platform shall undergo a thorough review, possible amendment, and approval every two years.

This document should be maintained by the Maryland Association of Student Council's State Legislative Affairs Coordinator(s) or another designee as assigned by the President.

This document was last approved at the Maryland Association of Student Council's Legislative Session on February 11, 2023.

Amendment Record

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