

MARYLAND ASSOCIATION  
OF STUDENT COUNCILS

**LEGISLATIVE  
PLATFORM**



# MARYLAND'S STUDENT VOICE

## 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 high schools and middle schools across all regions in Maryland.

MASC does not condone racism and discrimination, striving to diversify our members and educate them on diversity and its importance. MASC strives to empower every student to respectfully share their views and perspectives, free from the fear of harassment.

### WHAT WE DO

#### LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT & YOUTH COLLABORATION

MASC hosts three major conferences every year, which draw student leaders from across the state. At these 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 relating to civic engagement, leadership, and communication.

#### LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

MASC takes stances on youth-related bills in the Maryland General Assembly. MASC encourages student-led advocacy before legislative bodies and the establishment of relationships with State and Congressional elected officials representing Marylanders.

#### STUDENT SERVICE LEARNING

MASC is dedicated to supporting and fostering student service learning by sharing resources, ideas, and opportunities with schools. We strive to inspire and empower youth to engage in service projects, encouraging a culture of community involvement and advocacy. Through initiatives and resources, we aim to inspire service learning within student leadership.

## SINCE 1950

The Maryland Association of Student Councils has fostered a statewide community of youth leadership development, advocacy, and collaboration.





# Maryland Association of Student Councils

## Legislative Platform

Amended and Approved February 8, 2025

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# Maryland Association of Student Councils

## LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

### I. YOUTH REPRESENTATION

As a youth-led organization, MASC identifies, develops, and values the abilities of students. MASC affirms that young people are a vital demographic. They offer a unique view of the world and are capable of making well-informed decisions. Subsequently, MASC supports systems, policies, programs, and instances in which youth and students are given an opportunity to share their opinions and represent their peers.

#### MASC SUPPORTS:

- A. Student election of school, regional, state, and national student government officers and representatives;
- 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. The development of student advisory councils at the school, county, and state levels for the benefit of authorities seeking the youth perspective (superintendents, chief executives, principals, etc.);
- D. The appointment, with student input, of student representatives to boards and commissions at both the local and state levels that deal with youth-related issues and concerns;
- E. The allotment of full membership and voting rights for student representatives and members of state and local boards, panels, commissions, and task forces;
- F. The appointment and fair compensation of advisors to support the empowerment and representation of students;
- G. Compensation for student members, representatives, and commissioners on state and local boards of education equal to their adult counterparts;
- H. The establishment of regional student council associations with the support of full-time regional advisors in areas where they do not exist;
- I. Providing students the opportunity to speak on and testify about issues that directly affect them;
- J. Youth involvement in the creation and revision of legislation impacting students at the local, state, and national levels.

### II. PEER LEADERSHIP

MASC strives to develop leadership capabilities in students. MASC is led by high school and middle school student leaders, which exemplifies their practice of peer leadership. Moreover, MASC holds workshops and development courses that are taught by youth, and MASC supports systems, programs, and instances in which youth and students are empowered to lead and guide their peers.

#### MASC SUPPORTS:

- A. Maximizing and implementing peer leadership in 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.

### **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. MASC holds Maryland's school system to a high standard quality of education, and supports systems, programs, policies, and instances that contribute to an increased quality of education.

#### **MASC SUPPORTS:**

- A. High standards of learning across state and local curricula for all students;
- B. Providing educational opportunities specialized to meet each student's needs and abilities;
- C. Funding for and full utilization of up-to-date technology, technological literacy, and educational resources for the classroom;
- D. Visual and performing art education offered to students in all grade levels;
- E. Early intervention programs to enable all children to start school ready to learn;
- F. Integrating student service learning into course curricula and encouraging service outside the classroom;
- G. Maximizing the variety of co-curricular and extracurricular activities offered at all schools;
- H. School-based programs, related activities, and curricula that encourage civic participation;
- I. Comprehensive curricula that address and teach financial literacy including tax information and the effective management of credit and debit;
- J. Ensuring the availability of a complete and diverse course catalog available to all students (i.e. fundamental, honors, advanced placement, etc.) that encourages the teaching of specific areas of study;
- K. The expansion of Career and Technical Education and apprenticeship opportunities for students;
- L. Bolstered support for College and Career Readiness initiatives as well as post-secondary pathways other than higher education;
- M. Notation of honors, advanced placement, and intensive courses on report cards, high school transcripts, and school course syllabi as well as the allotment of weighted credit for course completion;
- N. Statewide establishment of eligibility requirements for participation in student activities;
- O. Option of early graduation for students meeting the graduation requirements;
- P. Initiatives to encourage youth to stay in school and continue their education;
- Q. Initiatives designed to keep college education affordable for Marylanders;
- R. Programs that keep high-achieving secondary school students in Maryland for higher education;
- S. Initiatives that encourage individuals to become teachers in Maryland;
- T. Improvements to staff training, including staff education in diversity, inclusion, and other measures that improve the quality and equitability of instruction for students;
- U. The instruction of students by teachers who are qualified in their specific subject matter;
- V. 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;

- W. State and federal funds provided for programs mandated by the state and federal governments;
- X. Reduction of class sizes where needed;
- Y. Student and faculty dress codes that complement and improve the learning environment;
- Z. Programs that promote parent/guardian and community involvement in students and schools;
- AA. Subsidized school breakfast and lunch funding for underprivileged students;
- BB. School systems paying for advanced placement and standardized testing exams;
- CC. Programs that help students prepare for college;
- DD. Opportunities for teachers to utilize their full expertise and educational background to interpret curriculum in ways that are beneficial to the improvement of the student learning experience;
- EE. The responsible use of artificial intelligence for educational purposes in schools by staff and students;
- FF. Ensuring that students have full access to educational literature and media in accordance with constitutionally protected expressive and intellectual liberties.

### **MASC OPPOSES:**

- 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;
- E. The absence or lack of diverse curricula that reflect the identities and nuances of Maryland's student body;
- F. The misappropriation or deferment of funds that may constrain or negatively impact the student population and community;
- G. The inappropriate utilization of artificial intelligence that violates codes of academic honesty such as cheating or plagiarism.

## **IV. STUDENT SAFETY AND DISCIPLINE**

As a statewide coalition of students, MASC strongly values the safety of our schools. Given the connection between student discipline and safety as well as the educational benefits of safe schools, MASC supports any reasonable and appropriate systems, programs, policies, or instances that improve the safety of public and private schools.

### **MASC SUPPORTS:**

- A. Proactive measures to ensure student safety, and to prevent school violence and vandalism;
- B. The 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. The establishment of behavioral standards for all students by local school systems;



- G. The publicization of progressive discipline programs within all schools;
- H. Parent/guardian involvement in disciplinary and restorative procedures regarding their student;
- 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;
- L. Laws that regulate the proper usage of weapons;
- M. Routine mandated safety drills including, but not limited to, severe weather conditions, fire, and school shootings, that:
  - a. Are “appropriate to a student’s developmental level and physical abilities, and take into consideration prior traumatic experiences, special needs, and temperaments;”<sup>1</sup>
  - b. Include comprehensive proactive training for staff; and
  - c. Give notice in advance to the school community, specifically families that have children with Individualized Educational Plans.
- N. Infrastructure that prioritizes student and staff safety;
- O. Effective restorative justice programs aimed at rehabilitating young people;
- P. The student’s right to act in self-defense in the event of an imminent physical threat.

### **MASC OPPOSES:**

- A. Disciplining students in school for out-of-school behavior without a nexus between it and the school;
  - a. This excludes:
    - i. “Serious or severe bullying or harassment targeting particular students;
    - ii. “Threats directed at teachers or other students;
    - iii. “Failure to follow rules about lessons, assignments, computer use, or other online school activities; and
    - iv. “Breach of school security devices.”<sup>2</sup>
- B. The searching and drug testing of students based on unsubstantiated rumors or claims;
- C. The inappropriate collection and use of biometric data.

## **V. HEALTH AND SOCIAL ISSUES**

The Maryland Association of Student Councils is home to some of Maryland’s best students and leaders. MASC sees the need for students to lead healthy lives to live long and successfully. Given the communal, economic, and personal benefits of being physically and mentally healthy, MASC supports systems, programs, policies, and instances that improve the health and well-being of Marylanders, especially Maryland youth.

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<sup>1</sup> NASP, NASRO, Safe and Sound Schools, *Best Practices for schools in active shooter and other armed assailant drills*, (Apr. 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Mahanoy Area School District v. B. L., 594 U.S. 2 (2021)

## **MASC SUPPORTS:**

- A. The 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 to students;
- G. Pathways and supports for teen parents to achieve their educational goals;
- H. Initiatives designed to promote positive mental health and wellbeing in youth;
- I. The training of school staff and coaches to recognize mental health issues amongst students and provide support;
- J. Efforts to prevent teen suicide;
- K. The training of all athletic coaches in mandatory protocols in response to injury, including, but not limited to, concussions and broken bones;
- L. Full funding and additional support for schools to obtain qualified athletic trainers;
- M. Full-time guidance counselors at all schools, proportional to the school's need;
- N. The reduction of the ratio of students to guidance counselors;
- O. Establishment and utilization of school-based “crisis counselors”;
- P. 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;
- 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, physical, sexual, and emotional health, and best nutritional practices;
  - a. Comprehensive sex education that promotes safe-sex practices and ways to prevent sexually transmitted infections;
- T. Comprehensive curricula that accurately teach and educate students on opioid awareness and the application of Naloxone or Narcan, medication used to reverse opioid overdoses; and
- U. The implementation of Narcan and subsequent faculty and student training to prevent opioid overdose by students and staff.

## **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.

### **MASC SUPPORTS:**

- 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 publicly funded schools; and
- H. Promoting the use of composting by schools.

### **MASC OPPOSES:**

- A. Environmentally unsustainable practices.

## **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 MASC 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.

### **MASC SUPPORTS:**

- 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. Extracurricular activities that promote the development of career and technical skills;
- G. Providing student interns with equal workplace protection as their fully employed counterparts;
- H. Initiatives to increase Maryland youth preparedness to function effectively in the workplace;
- I. Fair compensation of employees regardless of age;
- J. Full funding for Career and Technical Education and Dual Enrollment programs that count for credit towards a student's graduation requirements.

## **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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