

Blessing Chang

I have always been such a voice for advocacy. It has always been something I have desired to do, speaking up for the people who can't or are scared to speak up for themselves. I have been a gun violence prevention advocate, an immigration rights advocate, and a civic engagement advocate by doing different things like testifying and lobbying in Annapolis, voter turnout practices, and voter pre-registration drives. I want to take things to the next step in my advocacy journey and be the voice and leader for students in Maryland. I want to use my passion in advocacy and represent my peers, student leaders, and other advocate students here in Maryland! I want to start initiatives and practices to represent all the different counties in Maryland because a problem that has been very persistent here is the opportunity gap between counties. Some counties have more resources than others; that usually leaves them at a disadvantage and with unfair representation. I want to be the voice that takes initiative to **bridge** that gap through advocacy!! That is why I want to run for MASC 1st Vice President.

I already have a lot of experience in the advocacy field, I have been very involved in a lot of different organizations and internships that have given me the seat of an advocate. I have testified for many bills regarding ICE immigration (SB 245) and bills regarding student education (SB 204) and lobbied with legislators in the Maryland General Assembly for gun violence prevention bills (SB 118 and SB 692), giving me firsthand experience in the legislative advocacy process. I have testified at the Prince George's County Board of Education meeting representing PG County Regional SGA regarding student education. I started my own organization to educate youth on important local issues and inform them of their rights and so much more that has given me the passion, drive, and experience as an advocate!!

As MASC Vice President Candidate I want to represent students across different counties in Maryland through my platform **B.R.I.D.G.E**

B- Build connections between student councils in different counties by pairing well-resourced and under-resourced regional SGAs as partner schools. Partner schools would have the chance to share successful constitutions, event ideas, and practices with each other and work on projects together specifically towards advocacy. This way resources travel across counties!!

R- Reach counties with low MASC participation, specifically student council advisors and student leaders, through virtual forums and short surveys to tend to counties that can't travel and pay fees or any other disparities. Create one-pagers like "How to Get Involved with MASC" to spread student knowledge to participate.

I- Invest in student leadership opportunities by sharing grants, programs, and other funding opportunities with other counties. Advocate for equitable distribution of academic resources. So that we can close the opportunity gap between counties!!

D- Develop students, especially those from underrepresented counties, with skills and knowledge to advocate for themselves and their communities by hosting virtual leadership training opportunities that focus on knowing how to advocate to school boards, admin, legislators, and giving public testimony; student mentorship from experienced leaders; peer-led sessions; etc.

G- Grow long-term collaborations by tracking common challenges across counties through short, accessible surveys each semester and using the student input to push for statewide recommendations; Grow a movement, build momentum to empower students to create change in their communities and throughout Maryland.

E- Elevate student voices to decision makers by compiling student concerns into reports and sharing them with MSDE, legislators, and education leaders.

I am very passionate about advocating for students across all the different counties in Maryland through possible initiatives that can really help close the opportunity gap. I want to create and foster a system that is inclusive and representative, and by running and putting myself and initiatives out there, I hope to achieve just that! **BRIDGE!**