

Mr. Chairman, my name is Kelly Juleson-Scopino and I am submitting written testimony on behalf of the Greater Manchester Young Democrats in favor of **HB 6665 AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF STUDENTS ON LOCAL AND REGIONAL BOARDS OF EDUCATION AND A STUDY OF BULLYING ISSUES.**

One of the objectives of our group is to promote and protect the rights of young people and encourage youth to take an active interest in the community. We feel that including students on boards of education encourages students to take a greater interest in their community and ultimately promotes citizenship and builds future leaders.

Students are the ones who are most deeply affected by the decisions that the board of education makes. These decisions range from curriculum to budget changes, from staff changes to the daily lunch menu. Oftentimes, it is easy to forget about who those decisions are ultimately affecting, but with a student on the board there is now an immediate understanding of how the issue is going to affect the student body at large. Students will be able to help shape educational policy with a new freshness and bring new and innovative ways to strengthen the education system.

Students will benefit by having an active voice in the board of education. They will learn leadership and public-speaking skills that cannot be acquired in the traditional classroom. They also will gain an intensified sense of responsibility and dependability that they otherwise would not receive. The value of experiential learning should be heavily regarded when voting on this matter. This bill also offers an opportunity for the age old adage that 'adults don't care what we think' to be thrown out the window. While in many cases, a student's wants may not be able to be met, they can rest assured that their voice was heard and their request was turned down for a legitimate reason.

The implementation of this bill would also give 'adult' board of education members insight into the youth that they are affecting. They would feel a greater connection to those who are affected by their decisions and perhaps even a degree of heightened sensitivity when making these decisions. The efficacy of passed legislation will also be readily available to the members with a current student serving alongside them.

Any naysayers of this bill will likely question the place of a student, who is likely not even eligible to legally vote, on a board of education but we must not underestimate the value of experiential learning (for both the student and the adult members). An unofficial vote and a proper place at the table will be tremendously valuable in serving the community. A student's perspective and contributions during deliberations will serve as a constant reminder to the 'adult' board members as to why they are serving on the board of education.

Students have a vested interest in their education and boards of education are designed to make the best decisions possible for the sake of the students they serve; creating a union between the two seems natural.

In a democracy, all voices deserved to be heard—let's bring students to the table and give them the voice they deserve.

Thank you for your time.