

Maryland Youth Advisory Council 2023-2024 Annual Report



August 31, 2024

Submitted by: Governor's Office for Children on behalf of the
Maryland Youth Advisory Council

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Letter From The Chair



Dear Maryland Youth Advisory Council Members,

With the Council year coming to an end, I want to express my gratitude for the journey and honor that accompanied serving as Chair of the Maryland Youth Advisory Council. The 2023-24 Council is composed of 22 hardworking, diverse, creative, and dedicated student leaders, all of whom will go on to make Maryland and our world at large a better place for future generations. I am endlessly thankful for the hours each Councilmember spent advancing our challenging yet critical mission of representing young people across the state before our adult leaders.

This was a record-breaking year for the Council, especially as we continue to reckon with the post-COVID world and associated lack of youth engagement in the policy-making sphere. From spearheading new projects to providing testimony for countless bills to hosting/volunteering in youth-focused events across the state, the Maryland Youth Advisory Council has proven that youth *do* care about the future and are more than capable of articulating grievances and helping to forge solutions. I truly believe the Council has made Maryland a better place for young people, and we have set an exceptionally high bar for next year's Council.

It was an honor and privilege to Chair the Maryland Youth Advisory Council. As we reflect on all that we achieved together this year, I encourage you to look back on how far we have grown as leaders and individuals. I hope participation in this Council has shown you that efficacy in the political process is real; it simply requires time and focus. MYAC has left an indelible mark on my leadership journey, and I can't wait to pass the baton to another cohort of future change-makers.

Sincerely,

Grace Minakowski, Chair
Maryland Youth Advisory Council

Executive Summary

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council (the Council) has allowed for a group of youth representing the diversity of the State to voice opinions on legislation pertaining to youth; as well as give feedback on various programs and informational materials that benefit the youth of Maryland. By taking on these leadership roles and putting conviction to action, the Council has been able to make a valuable impact.

During the 2023-2024 term, members participated in various activities to voice their opinions and affect change:

- Held nine meetings, exceeding the required four meetings;
- Adopted four connected legislative priorities: Youth Services & Supports, Education, School & Community Safety, and Social Justice;
- Hosted a hybrid Community Conversation for youth across the State;
- Met with Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports to connect youth groups to grants;
- Dispersed \$5,000 in grant funds to five youth-led organizations;
- Conducted meetings with legislators and interest groups (virtual and in-person);
- Tracked and supported bills of interest, and provided written and oral testimony during the 2024 legislative session;
- Hosted an advocacy day in support of House Bill 456, House Bill 558, Senate Bill 386, and Senate Bill 432;
- Connected with the Accountability in Implementation for the Maryland Blueprint to promote blueprint awareness and provide youth feedback on implementation;
- Served as panelists and featured presenters at the Healthy St. Mary's Conference; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine "The Science of Engaging Youth Lived Experience in Health, Research, Practice, and Policy"; National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine "Understanding Youth Perspectives on Civic Engagement" seminar; Maryland Out of School Time (MOST) Network and MENTOR Maryland | DC Advocacy Day; American University Teen Mental Health Seminar; Maryland Civic Education Coalition Civic Engagement and Leadership Summit; 2024 Maryland State of Reform Health Policy Conference - Adolescence & Behavioral Health: Social Media, Gaming & Other Factors; and
- Volunteered as community partners for the BecomeOne Mental Health Suicide Prevention Walk and Bluecrabs Baseball End Hunger Canned Food Drive

All meeting minutes and bill testimony are available upon request from the Governor's Office for Children.

Background and Mission of the Council

BACKGROUND

The Council was established by the General Assembly in 2008 ([Chapter 559 of 2008](#), [Chapter 69 of 2009](#), and [Chapter 620 of 2016](#)) to ensure that Maryland youth are given the opportunity to provide feedback and recommendations regarding public policies and programs that affect their future and to take a leadership role in creating meaningful change.

The current members of the Council were appointed by the:

- Governor of Maryland;
- President of the Maryland Senate;
- Speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates;
- Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services (the predecessor for the Governor's Office for Children) based on nominations made by the:
 - Maryland Association of Student Councils;
 - University System of Maryland Student Council;
 - Maryland Higher Education Commission Student Advisory Council; and
 - Maryland Association of Local Management Boards.

Council members must be 14-22 years of age and serve a two-year term. The Council year is from September 1st to August 31st of the following year. Beginning with the 2024-2025 Council year, the Governor's Office for Children will replace the former Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victims Services as an appointing body.

MISSION

As a coalition of diverse young advocates and leaders from across the State, the Council addresses relevant issues by influencing legislation, spreading public awareness, and serving as a liaison between youth and policymakers.

VISION

The Council strives to be an effective voice that:

- Incites change for the betterment of Maryland youth;
- Ensures equal opportunity for all youth regardless of background or circumstance;
- Initiates political conversations with youth;
- Educates youth on political issues; and
- Is respected by legislators and other stakeholders on youth issues.

RESPONSIBILITIES

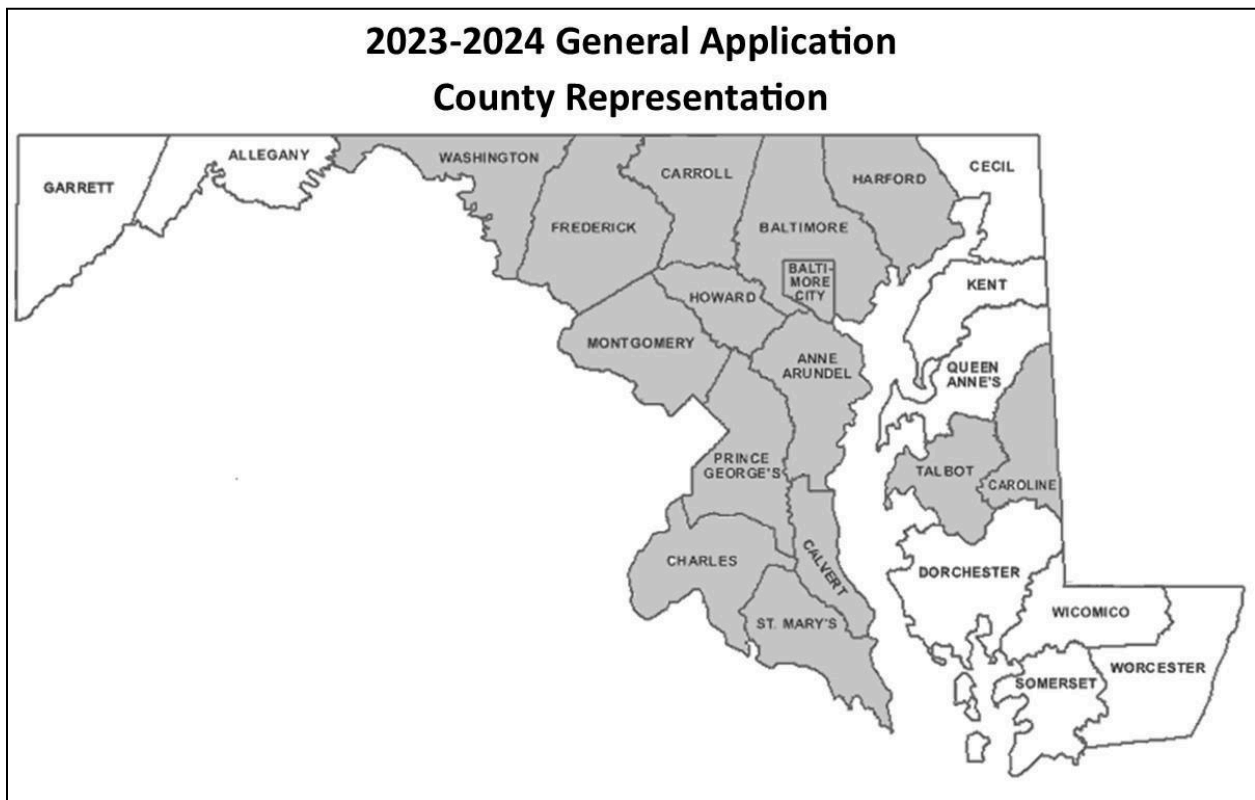
- Inform the Governor and the General Assembly of issues concerning youth, including offering testimony on these issues before legislative bodies;
- Examine issues of importance to youth, including education, a safe learning environment, employment opportunities, strategies to increase youth participation in local and State government, health care access and quality of care, substance abuse and underage drinking, emotional and physical well-being, the environment, poverty, homelessness, youth access to State and local services, suicide prevention, and educational accessibility issues for students with disabilities;
- Recommend one legislative proposal each legislative session concerning an issue of importance;

- Conduct a public campaign to raise awareness of the Council among Maryland youth;
- Participate in local youth activities or organizations;
- Advise local officials and community leaders on youth issues;
- Collect information from other youth groups in order to inform the activities of the Council; and
- Report its activities to the Governor and General Assembly before the last day of the Council year.

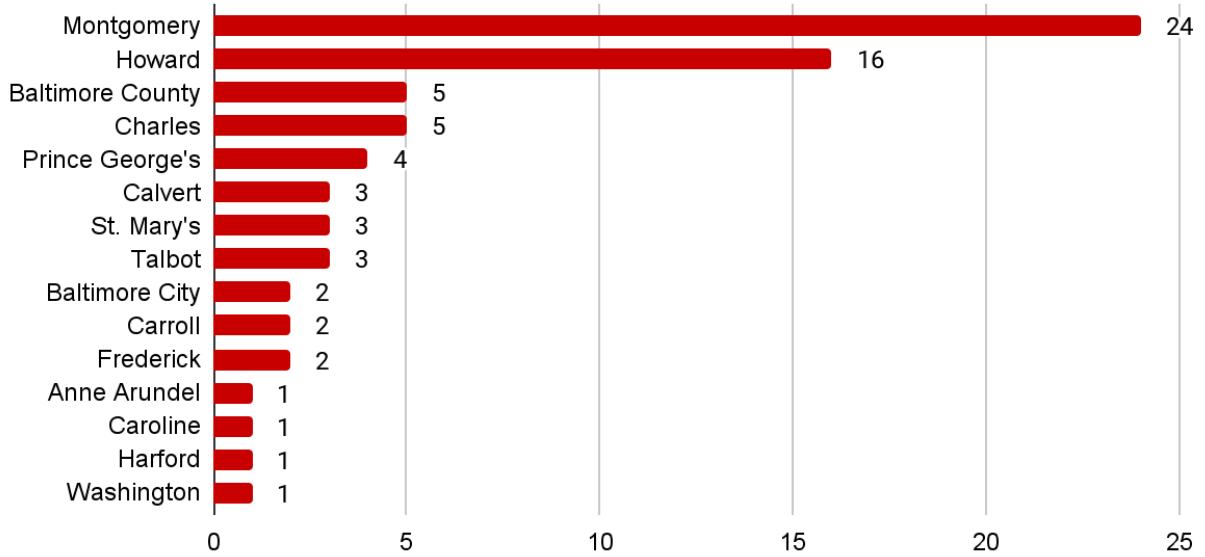
2023-2024 Applications at a Glance

For the 2023-2024 term, applications were available online on the Council’s website from March 1, 2023 through June 30, 2023. Seventy-three applications were received from youth residing in 15 counties, representing 46 high schools, colleges, and universities. Of these applicants, 67% identified as female, 19% identified as male, 3% identified as nonbinary, 1% identified as transgender, and 10% did not disclose their gender identity. The majority of applicants were from Montgomery County, representing 33% of the total applications. In addition, 85% of the applicants identified as non-white of which 27% identified as “South Asian or Indian American” and 19% identified as “Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American.”

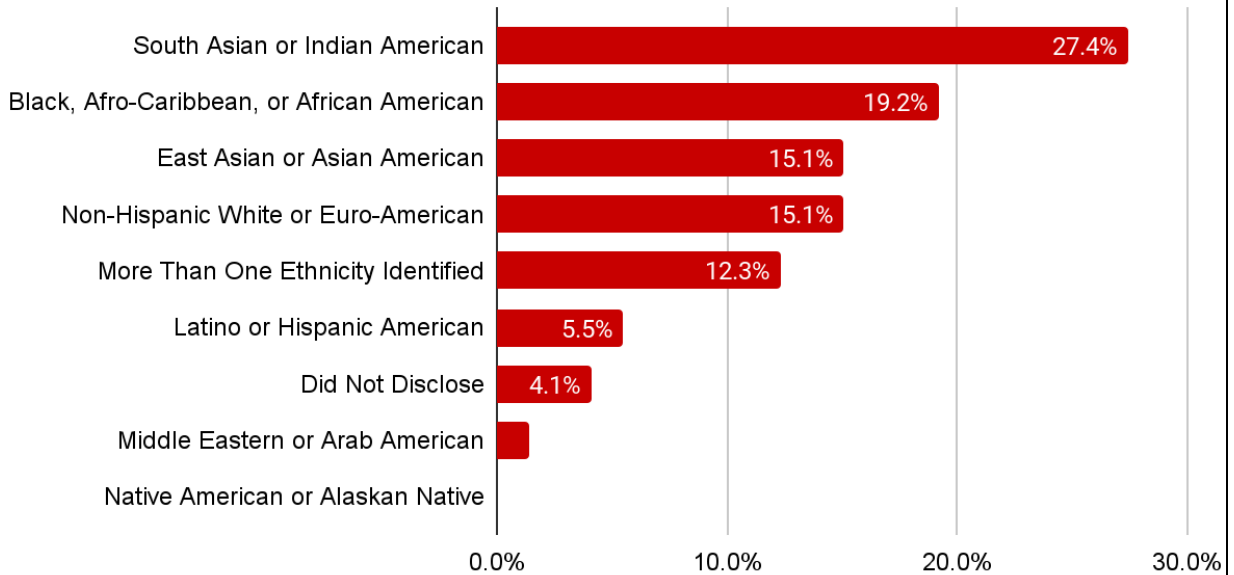
Applications were reviewed by Office staff and submitted recommendations for appointment to the appointing bodies as needed.



2023-2024 General Application Number of Applications by County

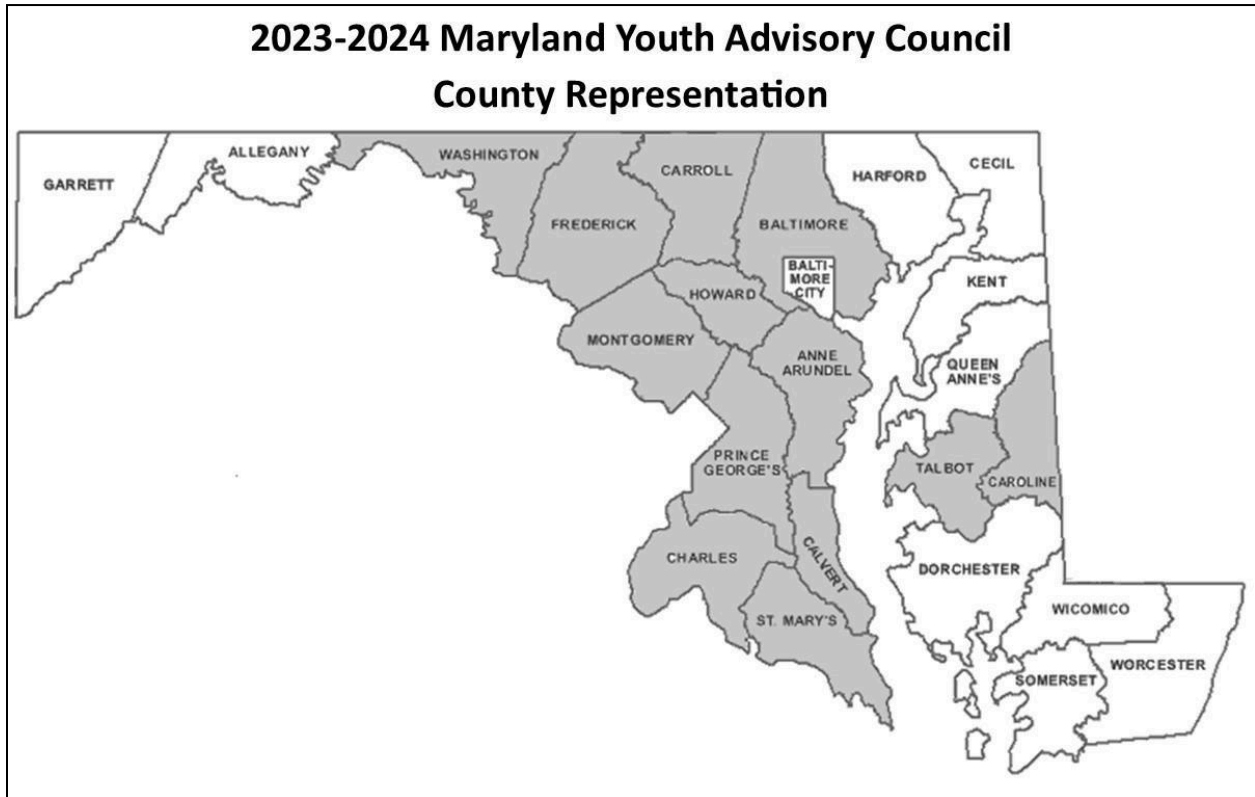


2023-2024 General Application Race/Ethnicity Representation

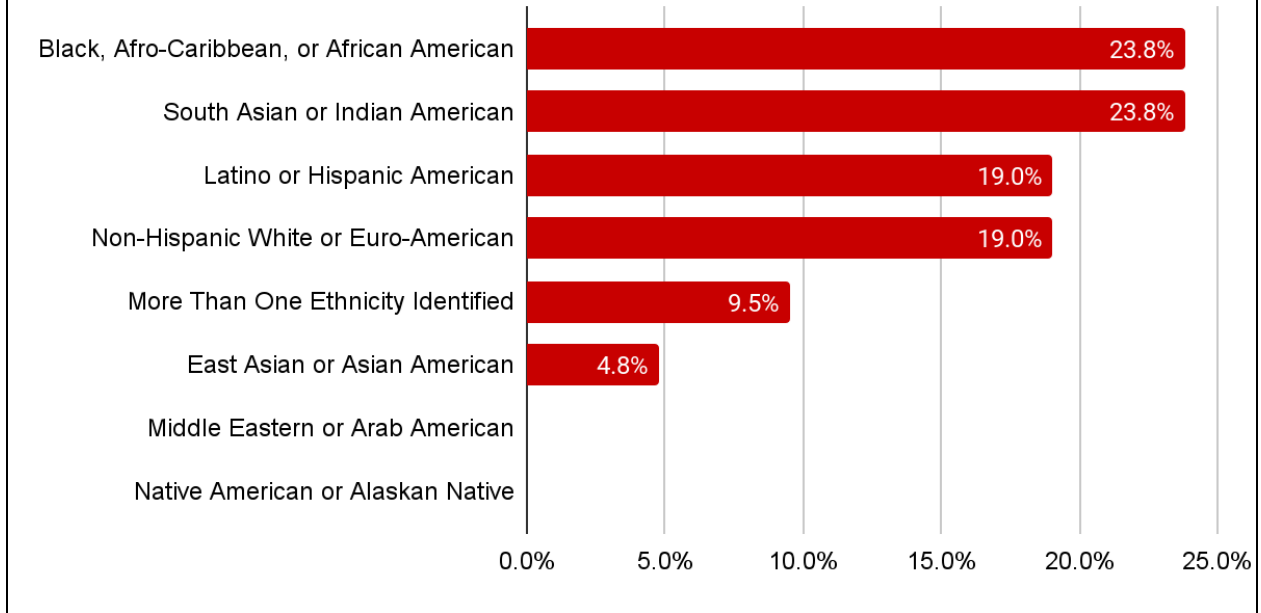


2023-2024 Council at a Glance

The 2023-2024 Council is composed of 21 members, representing 13 counties, 12 high schools, and seven colleges/universities. The Council includes 52% of members identifying as female, 43% identifying as male, and 5% identifying as non-binary. Of the 21 members, ten are returning second-year members and 11 are first-year members. In addition, 81% of Council members identify as non-white with nearly 24% of the Council identifying as “Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American” or “South Asian or Indian American.”



2023-2024 Maryland Youth Advisory Council Race/Ethnicity Representation



2023-2024 Maryland Youth Advisory Council Roster

2023-2024 MARYLAND YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL EXECUTIVE BOARD (elected by Council members)

Chair: Grace Minakowski

Vice Chair: William O'Donnell

Secretary: Folashade Epebinu

Legislative Committee Chair: Alexander Hossainkhail

Public Awareness Committee Chair: Chimee Ejiogu

Executive Board Members: Mahad Bhinder, Shradha Bista, Thomas Evans, Diana Flores, Zaria Naqvi

Tech Officer: Rishi Sheth

Historian: Alessia Cuba

Parliamentarian: Leslie Monter Casio

APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR

Appointed in 2022

Chimee Ejiogu: Howard County - Glenelg Country School

William O'Donnell: Talbot County - Easton High School

Appointed in 2023

Thomas Evans: Frederick County - Mount Saint Joseph High School

Nehal Naqvi: Howard County - University of Maryland Baltimore County

APPOINTED BY THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Appointed in 2022

Mahad Bhinder: Fredrick County - Urbana High School
Nicholas Carter: Baltimore County - Franklin High School
Eric Valentine Jr.: Charles County - University of Maryland, College Park

Appointed in 2023

No appointments were made

APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

Appointed in 2022

Nancy Lin: St. Mary's County - Great Mills High School

Appointed in 2023

Brooke Burton: Prince George's County - University of Maryland, Eastern Shore
Alexander Hossainkhail: Anne Arundel County - Hood College
Rishi Sheth: St. Mary's County - Great Mills High School

NOMINATED BY THE MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT COUNCILS

Appointed in 2022

Grace Minakowski: Calvert County - Huntingtown High School
Eman Zia: Anne Arundel County - South River High School

Appointed in 2023

Shradha Bista: Washington County - North Hagerstown High School
Alessia Cuba: Frederick County - Urbana High School

NOMINATED BY THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND STUDENT COUNCIL

Appointed in 2022

No appointments were made

Appointed in 2023

No appointments were made

NOMINATED BY THE MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION—STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

Appointed in 2022

Sade Davis: Prince George's County - Prince George's Community College
Stephen Hook: Baltimore County - Washington College

NOMINATED BY THE MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL MANAGEMENT BOARDS

Appointed in 2023

Folashade Epebinu: Montgomery County - Seneca Valley High School

Diana Flores: Carroll County - Carroll Community College
Leslie Monter Casio: Caroline County - North Caroline High School
Zaria Naqvi: Montgomery County - Winston Churchill High School

Council Meeting Overview

[Chapter 559 of 2008](#), [Chapter 69 of 2009](#), and [Chapter 620 of 2016](#) require the Council to meet at least four times each year and each meeting must be open to the public. However, the Council determined that meeting only four times a year was not sufficient to complete the Council’s intended work; therefore, the members decided to meet on a monthly basis. During the 2023-2024 term, the Council held hybrid meetings once a month from September to May. Meetings were held on Saturday afternoons.

MEETING #1: SEPTEMBER 16, 2023

At the first Council meeting of the year, members began by welcoming back returning second-year members and welcoming first-year members. Members were introduced to one another through group activities and discussions, followed by an overview of the Council, including its history, legislative platform, and member responsibilities. Council members held elections to select their officers for the year. The meeting closed with a presentation by the Maryland Students Against Drugs.

MEETING #2: OCTOBER 14, 2023

At the second Council meeting of the year, Council members had the opportunity to re-introduce themselves to one another through group activities and discussions. Council members also received an overview of Maryland’s youth policy structure, followed by brainstorming and planning for the upcoming Community Conversation event. Finally, members revised the FY2024 Small Grant Project application, set to be published in November 2023.



MEETING #3: NOVEMBER 4, 2023

The Council conducted regular business, which included presentations on parliamentary procedure from the Parliamentarian and Maryland’s legislative process by the Legislative Committee Chair. Additionally, Council members actively engaged in a mock Community Conversation and shared important updates about promoting the Community Conversation and Grant Project application.

MEETING #4: DECEMBER 16, 2023

Council members organized and led its annual Community Conversation event for youth and adults across the state. This year, the event was held in a hybrid format, utilizing feedback from virtual and in-person participants. There were two small breakout sessions in person and one large breakout session online. The three groups all joined for a final discussion before the event adjourned. This year’s event had the most turnout of recent years, with more than 100 attendees from 12 counties.



After the Community Conversation, the content from the event was discussed during the Council's debrief and committee breakout sessions. Finally, the Executive Board prepared to review grant applications, select finalists, and view presentations with the entire Council at the next meeting.

MEETING #5: JANUARY 20, 2024

At the January meeting, Council members briefly discussed updates about the Council's legislative priorities and the start of bill tracking for the Maryland 2024 legislative session. After legislative updates, the Council welcomed the seven small grant finalists to present their projects. Following the presentations and discussion, the Council selected five groups as grant recipients.

MEETING #6: FEBRUARY 17, 2024

With a focus on the work of the legislative committee, the February meeting honed in on legislative business where the Council voted on stances for bills the legislative committee is tracking and discussed upcoming advocacy opportunities. The Council also reviewed and approved the MYAC 2024-2025 application and recommender form.

MEETING #7: MARCH 9, 2024

In a brief session centered around brainstorming, the Council selected its four priority bills for the rest of the legislative session and discussed methods of gathering support and spreading awareness about the bills. The Council also discussed promoting the 2024-2025 application and application sessions and raising awareness of upcoming opportunities and events.

MEETING #8: APRIL 20, 2024

After the 2024 state legislative session adjourned, the Council reflected on bill testimony, tracking, and the pros and cons of Council operation during the legislative cycle. Members also recommended new strategies to incorporate during next year's legislative session. As the end of the Council year approaches, members discussed activities for the May meeting and other post-session actions. Finally, members considered the best methods for organizing summer meetings with legislators and hosting summer town halls in partnership with local and state elected officials.

MEETING #9: MAY 11, 2024

The May meeting concentrated on reflection and celebration. The meeting started with a presentation from the program manager of Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America who shared information about the Take Back Your 10 (TB10) statewide youth movement. After the presentation, Council members reflected on the successes and productivity of the year starting with quantitative data from the Legislative Committee. This review then led to a full-year debrief where all members shared what they believed worked for them or the Council, what didn't work, what could



be improved for next year, and their favorite memories. After the year-in-review session and a brief discussion about upcoming youth town halls and meetings, members participated in a fun, engaging, and competitive MYAC trivia to cap off a successful and active year.

Committees

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

Under the leadership of Legislative Committee Chair, Alexander Hossainkhail, the Committee began the year by reviewing previous organizational structures, developing a dual-linked and streamlined bill-tracking system, and outlining general processes, and other organizational items. A Committee “group chat” was created for easy notification of updates and reminders, in addition to biweekly meetings and general committee meetings.

Before the 2024 legislative session, the Legislative Committee developed and presented on the Maryland General Assembly and legislative processes to the Council. The presentation outlined State policy-making procedures, structure, Council-General Assembly interaction previews, and more. Developed on input from the Community Conversation, the Committee authored the legislative priorities under the 2024 platform, including Youth Services and Support, Education, School and Community Safety, and Social Justice. Lastly, the Council sent an introductory email detailing its mission and hope for collaboration with every legislator in the Maryland legislature, in addition to holding over 50 meetings with legislators on the previous topics.

During the 2024 legislative session, from January to April, Committee members updated the bill tracking spreadsheet weekly, with review occurring during Committee biweekly meetings. Throughout the bill tracking process, members researched legislation to create a bill synopsis, recorded sponsors and general information, noted suggested Council action, and recorded outcomes and Council votes. During monthly meetings, the Council voted on bill stances to determine the direction of testimony and other actions. The Committee continued to schedule meetings with legislators to advance the Council’s legislative agenda and urge support for Council stances and actions.

The Legislative Committee collaborated with the Public Awareness Committee to create social media graphics on bills and developed email templates to accompany information on relevant bills to inform and encourage action from students/youth stakeholders. During Advocacy Day, members presented on behalf of the Council in Annapolis and actively engaged with lawmakers and interest groups. During the 2024 Maryland Civic Education & Engagement Summit, the Council, as a featured presenter, developed a workshop to uplift youth engagement in legislation and awareness of the Council.

As the 2024 Legislative Session ended, the Committee developed a presentation on bills supported/tracked, actions taken, and member accomplishments. Throughout the summer, the Legislative Committee plans to hold youth towns and collaboration efforts to improve youth engagement and understanding in legislation, advocacy, and awareness of the Council. The Committee will continue strengthening and establishing connections with local, state, and federal legislators to ensure awareness and support of our efforts from the 2024 session, which will continue in the 2025 Legislative Session.

PUBLIC AWARENESS COMMITTEE

The Public Awareness Committee, in collaboration with the Legislative Committee, successfully promoted the Council and reached youth across the state of Maryland. The Committee used Instagram and Facebook to provide regular updates on Council activities throughout the year. A group chat was created to ensure easy communication between committee members, and the committee maintained a running notes document to keep track of ideas and action items.

Before the 2024 Legislative Session, the Committee utilized social media, email campaigns, and flyers to promote Council events and initiatives, such as the annual Community Conversation and the Small Grant Project. These efforts included the creation of graphics, videos, and Instagram stories. The Committee also promoted events held by supported organizations and recipients of the 2023-24 Grant.

During the 2024 legislative session, the Public Awareness Committee organized a social media campaign to raise awareness of the Council's supported bills and highlight Council member testimony. Several Council members provided oral testimony at the Maryland General Assembly or participated in events such as the Unlock Hope Youth Advocacy Day and the 2024 Maryland Civic Education & Engagement Summit, all featured on Council social media.

Toward the end of the year, the Public Awareness Committee created social media content to summarize the Council's activities and initiatives, providing a brief overview of member accomplishments, supported bill progress, and various advocacy events. The Committee also worked to promote the 2024-25 MYAC application and the accompanying application information sessions through social media posts and email campaigns. Throughout the summer, the Committee plans to increase awareness of the Council by promoting its youth town halls and continuing to encourage youth engagement in policy and advocacy.

2024 Legislative Session

LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

During the 2014-2015 session, the Legislative Committee spearheaded the development of a legislative platform to consolidate the views of the Council. The platform spans seven broad subjects: Youth Representation, Youth Leadership, Education, Health and Social Issues, Youth Safety and Student Discipline, Environmental Issues, and Youth Employment. Contained within the platform are over 100 statements to ensure that youth and young adults are supported and thrive in Maryland.

The platform allows the Council to share its views and recommendations for Maryland through a central, easy-to-follow document. Additionally, this document serves as a testament to the abilities of youth to be informed on a wide array of subject matters. The platform promotes informed advocacy, future Council discussions, and ultimately a better-defined and organized Council. As a living document, the platform evolves with the needs of youth and continues to influence change for years to come.

2024 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Priority #1 Youth Services and Supports

- I. Mental Health

- A. Broaden access to school psychologists and social workers
 - B. Reduce stigma surrounding mental health
- II. Substance Use
 - A. Reduce substance use and addiction stigma
 - B. Equip faculty with proper resources to address use in schools
- III. Out-of-School Time Services
 - A. Increase transportation to extracurricular activities

Priority #2 Education

- I. Supporting Implementation of Blueprint for Maryland
- II. Student Rights
 - A. Addressing book bans
 - B. Promote student voice on local Boards of Education
- III. Post-secondary Transition
 - A. Promote vocational programs through community colleges

Priority #3 School and Community Safety

- I. Reducing School and Community Violence
 - A. Establishing healthy relationships with School Resource Officers (SROs) and guidance counselors
 - B. Reducing school-to-prison pipeline
- II. Increasing Services, Support, and Education for Victims
 - A. Adequate guidance counselor training
 - B. Better delivery of services

Priority #4 Social Justice

- I. Economic Inequality
 - A. Address unequal and lack of funding throughout districts
- II. Environmental Justice
 - A. Promote the establishment of sustainability in communities
 - B. Promote environmental literacy among youth
- III. Anti-discrimination
 - A. Promote inclusivity within communities and school curriculums

2024 LEGISLATIVE BILLS

The Council tracked over 50 bills during the 2024 legislative session and made an official stance on 20 bills, with 14 including written testimony. Multiple members were able to either travel into Annapolis or attend virtual hearings to provide oral testimony on 6 of the total bills voted on by the Council. Council members worked to garner support for legislation of interest and collaborated on ways to bring lawmaker attention to youth needs across the State. The Council worked closely with Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary, Delegate Kris Fair, Delegate Joseph Vogel, and Senator Kagan on key bills.

The table below shows the bills tracked by the Council, the Council’s position on the bill, action taken by the Council and the bill’s outcome during the 2024 legislative session.

2024 Legislative Session Bill Tracker and Outcome				
Bill Number	Bill Name	Council's Stance	Testimony/Stance Provided	2024 Outcome
House Bill 4	Institutions of Higher Education – Admissions Standards – Prohibition on Consideration of Legacy Preference	Favorable	Written	Passed
House Bill 74	Public Schools - Lifesaver Schools Program - Establishment	Favorable	Favorable Stance	Stalled in Committee
House Bill 113 (Senate Bill 42)	Vehicle Laws - Horse Riding - Helmet Requirement for Minors	Favorable	Written and Oral	Passed
House Bill 206	Education - Student Behavior - Parent and Guardian Notice and Required Counseling (Parent and Guardian Accountability Act)	Favorable	Favorable Stance	Stalled in Committee
House Bill 373	Election Law - Voting Age - Board of Education Elections	Favorable	Written and Oral	Stalled in Committee
House Bill 436	Election Law - Voter Registration - Age and Notification to Minors	Favorable	Written	Passed in the House
House Bill 456 (Senate Bill 386)	County Boards of Education - Student Members - Voting Rights & Participation in Executive Sessions	Favorable	Written and Oral	Stalled in Committee
House Bill 532	Driver's Education Assistance Grant Program	Favorable	Written	Stalled in Committee
House Bill 535	Education – Maryland Task Force on Educator Housing	Favorable	None	Stalled in Committee
House Bill 542	Department of Human Services - Children in Foster Care - Luggage	Favorable	Favorable Stance	Passed
House Bill 558	Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework - Established	Favorable	Written and Oral	Passed in the House
Senate Bill 705	Health Insurance - Qualified Resident Enrollment Program (Access to Care Act)	Favorable	Written	Passed
Senate Bill 5	Higher Education - University System of Maryland, Morgan State University, and St. Mary's College of Maryland - Guaranteed Admissions	Favorable	None	Stalled in Committee
Senate Bill 47	Public Health - Sale of Diet Pills to Minors - Prohibition (Protecting Teenagers From Unregulated Diet Pills)	Favorable	Written	Stalled in Committee
Senate Bill 103	Overdose Awareness Day	Favorable	Written	Stalled in Committee
Senate Bill 165	Education – Coaches – Mental Health Training	Favorable	None	Passed
Senate Bill 432 (House Bill 416)	Public Schools - Active Shooter Safety Drills or Trainings - Requirements	Favorable	Written and Oral	Passed in the Senate
Senate Bill 738	Freedom to Read Act	Favorable	Written and Oral	Passed
Senate Bill 762	Education - Maryland Civic Excellence Program - Established	Favorable	Written	Passed in the Senate

2024 Legislative Session Bill Tracker and Outcome				
Senate Bill 200	Counties - Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks - Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools	Favorable	Written	Stalled in Committee

2024 Oral Testimony



On February 7th, 2024, the Maryland Youth Advisory Council held its advocacy day in Annapolis in support of House Bill 456/Senate Bill 386, House Bill 558, and Senate Bill 432. HB456/SB386 would standardize the voting rights of Student Members of the Board of Education (SMOBs) across the state. The Council also supported an amendment to HB456 that would allow all student board members to have voting rights without repealing the current privileges of representatives in certain counties who already can vote on all board matters. HB558 would ensure that all Maryland youth receive equal access to quality health education in public schools. SB432 would identify best practices for active shooter safety drills in schools. Members who testified at the event include Vice-Chair William O’Donnell; Legislative Committee Chair Alexander Hossainkhail; and Executive Board Member Zaria Naqvi.

O’Donnell was selected to testify on Delegate Atterbeary’s bill panel for House Bill 558, where he was the only youth member. Asking for an amendment to remove the opt-out provision for LGBTQ+ topics, he told the committee that “nothing that I have been taught in my health classes from kindergarten to now, as a senior in high school, has resonated with my experiences.” Additionally, O’Donnell was asked to speak on Delegate Fair’s bill panel for House Bill 456, where he advocated alongside two current student board members from Calvert and Prince George’s counties.

Hossainkhail testified on Senate Bill 386 as the only college student alongside a group of 5 high school student leaders to support the bill. Speaking directly to Senator Feldman, he contended that “the inclusion of student voices in educational decision-making is not only beneficial but essential for creating responsive learning environments.”

Naqvi testified on Senate Bill 432, providing insight from her experience on the Council and the Maryland School Safety Subcabinet. She was one of two students to testify in favor of this bill and urged the committee to listen to students' voices. “One of the most distressing aspects [of active shooter safety drills] is the lack of communication before, during, and after these events,” she said.

2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION PAGES

Starting in the 1970s, the Maryland General Assembly Page Program was established to provide high school seniors the opportunity to learn more about the legislative process by being directly engaged with legislators on the floor in the House of Delegates and the Senate. In addition to assisting legislators on

the floor, pages learn about the history of the State House and have discussions with legislators, their staff, and other staff that play a vital role in ensuring the 90-day legislative session runs smoothly. Each year, 105 pages and 36 alternates from across the state are selected through a competitive process to represent their schools and counties in Annapolis. Pages serve two non-consecutive weeks in Annapolis. This year, four Council members were selected to represent their communities and serve as pages. Their names, counties, and schools are listed below:

Eman Zia - Anne Arundel County - South River High School
Folashade Epebinu - Montgomery County - Seneca Valley High School
Leslie Monter Casio - Caroline County - North Caroline High School
William O'Donnell - Talbot County - Easton High School

From this group, two were competitively selected as one of 24 Pages to return to the State House and assist legislators on Sine Die, the last and busiest day of the legislative session. William O'Donnell served in the House chamber, and Folashade Epebinu served in the Senate chamber.



Other Meetings, Events, and Activities

END HUNGER CALVERT COUNTY

On September 9th and September 10th, members of the Maryland Youth Advisory Council volunteered with End Hunger Calvert County in partnership with the Southern Maryland Blue Crabs baseball team at their "Grand Slam Giving" Food Drive. Members helped collect non-perishable food items to be donated to local pantries in exchange for admission to the game.

HEALTHY ST. MARY'S PARTNERSHIP PRESENTATION

On September 28, 2023, the Maryland Youth Advisory Council was invited to present at the Annual Health St. Mary's Partnership Presentation. The meeting was held at the Center Hall at the University System of Maryland at Southern Maryland, to educate the local community members from subject matter experts and provide updates on local health improvement efforts. MYAC Member Rishi Sheth attended and presented "The Importance of Youth Engagement Within Society" to educate the community about the benefits of getting youth involved within the community at an early age.



SUICIDE AND MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WALK

On October 7th, 2023, MYAC partnered with the BecomeOne Mental Health Project for their second annual “One More Light” Suicide Prevention Walk. The walk was hosted in Chesapeake Beach, Maryland, and was attended by Council Chair Grace Minakowski who volunteered during the event. The event featured mental health resource booths, food, live music, and a lantern-lighting walk on the Chesapeake Beach Railway Trail. The Council also worked with BecomeOne to help secure grants for their “It’s Valid” Photo Project which launched in Calvert County Public Schools.

THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES BOARD ON CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES (BCYF) - THE SCIENCE OF ENGAGING YOUTH LIVED EXPERIENCE IN HEALTH RESEARCH, PRACTICE, AND POLICY - WORKSHOP

Council Chair Grace Minakowski was invited to help plan and participate in the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine’s Board on Children, Youth, and Families’ “The Science of Engaging Youth” Fall Workshop. Before her presentation, Minakowski participated in a preparatory session to shape the workshop over the summer. The workshop can be viewed with the following link: https://www.nationalacademies.org/event/40727_10-2023_the-science-of-engaging-youth-lived-experience-in-health-research-practice-and-policy-a-workshop

On October 11th and October 12th, 2023, Minakowski participated in a panel discussion presented before policymakers and adult leaders across the countries. The panel focused on the best ways to engage youth in research, policy-making, and implementation. During the panel, Minakowski expanded upon this tension between local and state control, relaying an instance in which her advisory council advocated for a bill to enforce the Maryland Department of Education’s standards for health curricula, which include discussions of sexual health, gender, and sexuality. The bill failed and she credited this, in part, to pushback from local school boards. Minakowski explained, “It can be disheartening to feel like adults are only so willing to listen to you until we say something that they don’t necessarily want to hear.”

Minakowski also emphasized the value of conducting research to document the outcomes of youth engagement, urging researchers to ask, “How does having a student member on things like a school board affect policy in the school board? What does their vote look like? What does their training look like?” She also called for improved dissemination of research to youth and improved youth access to research, highlighting the barrier presented by paywalls. Minakowski urged researchers to consider how they could bring research about youth well-being directly to youth, giving examples like videos and summary articles targeted to youth.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

On December 16th, 2023, the Council hosted its annual Community Conversation to engage with youth/youth stakeholders across the state and gather feedback to shape the Council's legislative priorities. The Community Conversation was attended by in-person and virtual participants from all across the state, and our attendance numbers significantly rebounded since our first in-person Community Conversation in 2022 since the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Community Conversation was opened with brief remarks from our Chair and Legislative Chair, and participants were then broken up into multiple in-person/one virtual breakout rooms for discussion. Breakouts were led by Council members, consisting of one scribe and one discussion lead. Within breakouts, attendees discussed the biggest problems they face as young people in Maryland and discussed potential causes. At the end of

the event, we joined as one group to highlight the most common discussion points and search for potential solutions.

The most common points of discussion heard at the Community Conversation were related to inequities in school/district funding, the lack of accessible mental health resources for young people, substance abuse/Narcan administration, Maryland’s Blueprint, book bans/suppression of free speech in schools and communities, Student Resource Officers/the school-to-prison pipeline, and inclusivity within school curriculum. The Legislative Committee used this feedback to draft four key priorities for the 2024 Legislative Session: Youth Services and Support, Education, School and Community Safety, and Social Justice.



2024 UNLOCK HOPE YOUTH ADVOCACY DAY

On February 26th, 2024, the Maryland Youth Advisory Council was invited by the Maryland Out of School Time (MOST) Network, MENTOR Maryland | DC, and Maryland YMCA Youth in Government to participate in the Unlock Hope Youth Advocacy Day. Members in attendance included Vice Chair William O’Donnell, Secretary Folashade Epebinu, Shradha Bista, Alessia Cuba, Leslie Monter-Casio, and Zaria Naqvi. The advocacy day began with a 30-minute presentation from Council members Shradha Bista, Alessia Cuba, and Folashade Epebinu, who educated community school practitioners, youth development program providers, student participants, and their family members about Maryland’s legislative process.

Following the presentation, Council members spoke with various delegates and their staff about bills supported by MENTOR Maryland | DC and the MOST Network, providing direct feedback on how the bills would benefit their youth constituents. Councilmember Folashade Epebinu led discussions about the Maryland Kids Code (HB603/SB571), specifically “how social media platforms have impacted [Generation Z] and youth in our spaces.” The day concluded with Senator Cory McCray recognizing Council members for their advocacy work on the Senate floor.

Testimonials from MYAC members can be found on the following page:
<https://mentormddc.org/2024/04/19/youth-advocacy-day-reflections/>



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY TEEN MENTAL HEALTH SEMINAR

On April 10th, 2024, the Maryland Youth Advisory Council was invited by American University professor Dr. Jody Gan to present at the 'CORE-105 Complex Problems Seminar,' a class centered around teen mental health. Councilmembers William O'Donnell, Folashade Epebinu, Rishi Sheth, Thomas Evans, and Zaria Naqvi developed and presented a 45-minute workshop to first-year American University students.

The workshop was intended to give students an overview of how the council functions, educate about policies that address health education, youth suicide prevention, mental health awareness, and substance use prevention, as well as address bills and other projects supported by the Council that relate to Teen Health. The class concluded with a question-and-answer panel for students to ask the Council members any final questions.

2024 MARYLAND CIVIC EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT LEADERSHIP SUMMIT: EMPOWERING YOUTH TO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY

On April 20, 2024, The Maryland Youth Advisory Council was invited by Genie Massey to present at the 2024 Maryland Civic Education and Engagement Leadership Summit: Empowering Youth to Shape the Future of Democracy. Councilmembers Grace Minakowski, Alexander Hossainkhail, and Folashade Epebinu developed and presented a 30-minute workshop to youth leaders at the event.

The workshop entitled, "Youth in Legislation: Understanding and Engaging in the Law-Making Process" was intended to give attendees a basic understanding of how the Maryland General Assembly (state legislature) operates and the issues the MGA has jurisdiction over, teach attendees about ways they can engage in the legislative process as a young person and dissect examples of the Council's advocacy effort (testimony, meetings with legislators, rallying/collaborating with other organizations, information campaigns, and youth-leadership), and explain some of the Council's youth-related focus bills and analyze the various perspectives in favor/in opposition of said bills.

The presentation was given during the opening session before most conference attendees. We were able to network with leaders from the Maryland League of Women Voters, Maryland Corps, UMD, and more!



THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES BOARD ON CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES (BCYF) - UNDERSTANDING YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT - SEMINAR

On May 1st, 2024, Secretary, Folashade Epebinu, participated in the National Academies BCYF youth seminar centered around understanding youth perspectives on civic engagement. The feedback from the youth participants in the seminar will be used to create a consensus study on youth civic engagement and its impact on youth well-being. As part of the seminar, Folashade and other youth leaders across the country discussed how adults can support youth civic engagement and underscore the positive impact of

youth civic engagement on well-being.

In the first session, Folashade shared a time when her voice was heard when she advocated to the central office staff about an insensitive class assignment highlighting how the adult leaders took action instead of disregarding how she and her peers felt. She had the opportunity to speak to the fact that youth are not oblivious to what is going on in their communities and sometimes a lack of civic engagement does not mean a lack of understanding of issues in a community. Folashade also communicated with the audience about being told that she and her peers don't understand legislation or political issues during a conversation about how some adults view youth who are civically engaged or strive to be.

In the second session, Folashade shared key points from a discussion held in a pre-seminar breakout group. Key points from this discussion included:

- An emphasis needs to be placed on trying to help students get the proper information in regards to not only how they can get civically engaged but also when it comes to research issues in their community, state, or country to inform their advocacy and stance on an issue.
- Schools need to host more events where students can learn different ways of being civically engaged and bring in experts from various organizations to teach students about the different avenues to creating change in their communities.
- Transportation, inconvenient meeting times, lack of youth and adult support, and not having access to resources to know certain issues exist are barriers to youth civic engagement.
- The importance of being open to various backgrounds and perspectives.

On the note of the consensus study, Folashade gave insight into an intergenerational collaboration that can be studied by highlighting MYAC's participation in the Maryland Civic Education Summit. In addition, she communicated how the voices of younger children, immigrants, and other youth groups can be heard and prioritized.

The recording of the seminar can be found on the following page:

https://www.nationalacademies.org/event/42241_05-2024_understanding-youth-perspectives-on-civic-engagement-seminar

2024-2025 APPLICATION Q&A SESSION

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council 2024-2025 application opened on March 1st, 2024, and will stay open until June 30th, 2024. The Council hosted two application sessions to ensure that all interested applicants have an opportunity to learn more about the application and application process, hear from current Council members, and have any questions answered. The sessions were held on May 30th, 2024 7:00-8:00 pm and June 2nd, 2024 2:00 - 3:00 pm. Lastly, the June application session was recorded and posted to our social media accounts for those unable to attend.

2024 MARYLAND STATE OF REFORM HEALTH POLICY CONFERENCE - ADOLESCENCE & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH: SOCIAL MEDIA, GAMING & OTHER FACTORS PANEL



On June 7, 2024, Alessia Cuba participated in the 2024 Maryland State of Reform Health Policy Conference - Adolescence & Behavioral Health: Social Media, Gaming & Other Factors Panel. During the panel, it was noted that the Maryland General Assembly considered a swath of bills combating the negative impact of online gaming and social media on behavioral health. Experts across the state are considering different ways to address the challenge including commissioning studies and launching public awareness campaigns. The panelist shared personal experiences of the challenges faced by young people and the initiatives and strategies being implemented to combat these issues.

AFTERSCHOOL FOR ALL CHALLENGE AND ADVOCACY DAY



On June 10th-11th in Washington, DC, the Maryland Youth Advisory Council joined the Maryland Out-Of-School-Time Network and the Afterschool Alliance for the "Afterschool For All Challenge." The two day conference consisted of workshops, meetings with representatives, and networking to help push for increased funding/support for afterschool programming in Maryland. The specific legislative asks were increased funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC), increased funding for the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), supporting the need of older youth through the Youth Workforce Readiness Act, fulfilling the STEM-related promises under the CHIPS and Science Act, and urging participation in the Congressional Afterschool Conference.

On day one of the Afterschool For All Challenge, Councilmember Alessia Cuba attended a day of workshops related to federal policy and advocacy. Through the workshops MYAC connected with youth organizations across the country, building networks that will be beneficial for future collaboration. Beyond just networking, the workshops included specialized training on media outreach strategies, helping participants learn how to effectively share their work with a wider audience and the steps to get their projects covered by news channels. The media training was especially impactful, providing practical insights on using different platforms to amplify MYAC's messages. Overall, these efforts have strengthened MYAC's ability to make a difference and expanded our influence in the youth advocacy space.

On day two, Councilmembers Alessia Cuba, Rishi Sheth, Folashade Epebinu, Shradha Bista, Zaria Naqvi, and Grace Minakowski joined representatives from the Maryland Out-Of-School-Time Network to meet with educational staffers for Senator Ben Cardin, Senator Chris Van Hollen, and Representative Jamie Raskin. Councilmembers got to share their experiences with afterschool programming and explained the importance of providing community spaces/opportunities to all young people. They also conducted office visits with the entire Maryland Delegation. The day ended with a showcase in the Harding Senate Office Buildings in which MYAC, among other youth-led groups across the nation, displayed their accomplishments in advocacy & service.

TAKE BACK YOUR 10 YOUTH SUMMIT

For many years, the Council has provided the Maryland Department of Health with feedback and youth voice on issues relating to tobacco and vape use. In June 2023, the Council participated in the first summit that concluded with the launch of the initiative - titled "Take Back Your 10!" - and the creation of its own hashtag, #TB10! The dynamic and visionary youth leaders developed this powerful name, symbolizing their resolute intention to reclaim the ten years that tobacco and vape use often rob from our lives. During the 2023-2024 year, the Council members and the Advisor participated in informational interviews about youth-led initiatives, use of social media, and general ideas and attitudes on tobacco and vape use to inform the agenda and strategies for the 2024 summit.



The summit was held on Saturday, June 15, 2024, at the University of Maryland, College Park and was attended by Alessia Cuba and Rishi Sheth. During the summit, participants were provided with information about the history of tobacco product advertising, key legislation, and statistics on the health and financial impact of tobacco and vape use.



The group will reconvene to develop a meeting schedule, training opportunities, and next steps to support Maryland's tobacco and vape use prevention efforts. The Council will continue to participate in and support this initiative.

MENTOR MD|DC - MONTGOMERY COUNTY SUMMER RISE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

On June 27, 2024, Secretary Folashade Epebinu and Alessia Cuba were invited by MENTOR MD|DC to provide training for two Summer RISE interns that were placed with MENTOR. During the summer, the interns were tasked with developing a youth advisory council to ensure young people are engaged in the organization's strategic planning and decision-making processes. The Council members provided an overview of the Council's work with the legislature, local leaders, and in the community to raise the voices of youth advocates in Maryland. Members also shared their experiences on what has worked well and ways to improve community and youth engagement to support the creation of the MENTOR MD|DC Youth Advisory Council. The Council is excited to continue to support this effort started by the 2024 Summer RISE Interns. More about the interns is available on the [MENTOR MD|DC August Blog Post](#).

2023-2024 Small Grants Project

For the 2023-2024 year, the Maryland Children's Cabinet approved the use of \$5,000 of the Children's Cabinet Interagency Fund (CCIF) for the Council to disperse small grants to youth-run organizations across the State. These funds will be used to create small projects designed to impact Maryland youth and young adults.

Under the leadership of the Council's Executive Board, the Council designed the application process to invite eligible organizations to apply for grant funds to cover the cost of Maryland-based and youth-led

projects. It also required the proposed project to relate to or impact one or more of the Council's legislative topic areas. Members of the Executive Board also created application questions and requirements. In addition to explaining the projected scope and impact of each organization's project, applicants must identify an adult advisor and include a proposed budget for their project. Finally, the Executive Board created a timeline for the grant process. This included two planned informational sessions, an application due date, an application review process, and planned presentations from select organizations to the entire Council.

The Council released the application in November 2023 and hosted information sessions for potential applicants. The Council received 15 grant applications and invited seven applicants to present their projects to the Council at the January meeting. Presentations included the mission of their organizations, execution, impact, implementation of the projects, and an explanation of the budget. Council members were able to ask questions and discuss funding for each project.

In January 2024, the Council approved five \$1,000 awards for the following projects:

Barnes and Scott Youth Law Camp Membership Program - *Barnes and Scott Youth Law Camp (statewide)*

The Barnes and Scott Youth Law Camp Membership is an investment in Maryland youth. Chosen from a pool of elite youth leaders, thirty students will embark on a transformative journey. Tours with Maryland leadership, modules with lawyers, and fellowships amongst themselves are all perks of Youth Camp Membership. This immersive learning experience, stretching from February to December, is bound to produce the next generation of legal and political advocates. Barnes and Scott have eighteen resource-rich events intended for their inaugural class, with five of their Government Education events occurring from February-July. Members will be left with an indelible mark, proud legacies of Barnes and Scott Youth Law Camp. **Council priority: Strategies to Increase Youth Participation in Local and State Government**

ETE School Kits - *Equality Through Education Corp (statewide)*

ETE Essential Kits is an innovative initiative aimed at the widespread distribution of resources across Maryland, specifically targeting schools with identified needs, homeless shelters, hospitals, and libraries. These meticulously crafted kits are tailored to empower and support the individualized needs of underprivileged students. The kits offer a high level of personalization, for the younger demographic these will include storybooks, art supplies, educational charts, toys, and experiment kits. For the older demographic, these will include AP/IB exam books, flashcards, and school supplies. Both will also include one Mi-fi router upon special request ensuring that students will get internet access at home. Each kit packaged in an ETE branded box will feature motivational messages and a comprehensive guide with online learning resources and advocacy opportunities for students to get involved. **Council priority: Poverty**

Black Health 5k Run/Walk - *Huntingtown High School Black Student Union (Calvert County)*



The HHS BSU Black Health 5k Run/Walk is a 5k run to raise awareness for black health disparities in the community, such as sickle cell, heart disease, and diabetes. The run was hosted at Huntingtown High School and took place on Saturday, April 6th, 2024. The BSU event featured health screenings, activities like face painting, and snacks/medals for participants. Additionally, the BSU raffled off a fitness watch for participants.

Council priority: Emotional and Physical Well-Being

Environmental Education Program - *Climate Health Education Initiative (Montgomery County)*

The Environmental Education Program will give younger students the chance to engage in interactive lessons to learn more about the environment. Depending on the school's availability, school visits are conducted by CHEI members once per week for six weeks. Every week, there is a specific lesson delivered to the students, and each lesson contains a hands-on activity. With each lesson, activity, and event, the initiative will give students a platform where they feel comfortable voicing concerns and supplies students with resources to take environmental action in their schools.



Council priority: Education, Environment

STEMpedic Foundation - *STEMpedic Foundation (statewide)*



The STEMpedic Foundation will ignite curiosity and foster a love for learning in young hospital patients by providing them with STEM kits to explore science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The project aims to stimulate their minds, encourage critical thinking, and inspire a sense of wonder about the world around them. The STEMpedic Foundation believes engagement with STEM can have a positive impact on their healing journey by promoting resilience, optimism, and a sense of hope. In addition to the educational benefits, the STEM kits also provide a welcome distraction from the hospital environment.

Council priority: Education, Health Care Access and Quality of Care

Grant recipients must submit an end-of-project report to the Council by July 31, 2024. The Council will also advocate to the Maryland Children's Cabinet to maintain funding for the Council's Small Grant Project for the 2024-2025 term.

Recommendations for 2024-2025 Council

At the final meeting of the year, Ms. Drushel Williams facilitated a reflection activity for members to think about the Council year, focusing on: (1) what worked, (2) what did not work, (3) recommendations for improvement next year, (4) and favorite memory. Below are the results of the reflection activity. The Council recommends that the 2024-2025 Council review and consider these ideas for the improvement of the Council and related activities during the 2024-2025 term.

WHAT WORKED? WHAT DID YOU LIKE? WHAT SHOULD WE KEEP NEXT YEAR?

- **Meeting structure and environment**
 - The second-year members met over the summer to discuss goals for the next year which was very helpful in guiding their actions this year
 - Chimee, the Chair of the Public Awareness Committee, and Alex, the Chair of the Legislative Committee, ran their committees in a very productive way
 - General meetings were kept brief and there wasn't a discussion of previous issues
 - Roll immediately into business at hand
 - The use of the hybrid has been effective in keeping meetings accessible
- **Advocacy and events**
 - The Council did great work in outreach and getting diverse representation at our events
 - Bringing friends to community conversation was a great way to get people from various countries at the event
 - People are excited about our town halls and are reaching out
- **Public awareness**
 - Continue having email as the formal method of communication
 - Text communication for the full Council was helpful
 - Legislative committee members were very helpful in developing posts
- **Opportunities and Council environment**
 - Diverse representation should continue in MYAC next year
 - Guidance from second-year members, especially with leadership, was helpful
 - Pairing up first and second-year members to help ease them into MYAC
 - Before we started anything new, things were clarified, opening the door for an open learning environment
 - Throughout the year there were high levels of engagement and productivity across the Council
 - The MYAC Google Drive this year was great and well-organized
 - Adding the Council Google calendar was very helpful with organization, most members utilized the feature

WHAT DID NOT WORK? WHAT DID YOU NOT LIKE?

- **Meeting structure and environment**
 - Carpool for more rural areas
- **Advocacy and events**
 - A lot of the same people kept coming to events

- Some members felt nervous about coming to events or taking opportunities as first-year members because they were worried that they would not be able to represent MYAC well
- Deadlines were not always met for Council testimony, although it did eventually get done
- **Communication**
 - Text communication issues for the full Council (ex. Too many group chats)
 - Lack of responses to chair emails and texts
- **Opportunities and Council environment**
 - A lot of work fell onto the work of the some members who were more active
 - Some Council members came in with the perception that some Council members were already in charge

WHAT CAN BE BETTER NEXT YEAR? WHAT SHOULD BE DIFFERENT?

- **Meeting structure and environment**
 - Continue to emphasize hybrid, prioritize in-person involvement
 - In-person committee meetings were the most productive
 - Consider having a staff development day for all Council members to work on onboarding
 - It might be best to do the training at the first meeting
 - The day will help establish strong relationships between Council members early on
 - MYAC alumni could possibly lead this day to avoid discouraging first-year members from seeking leadership positions
 - Consider having a separate meeting for first-year members to build a network and learn about the general assembly
 - Develop friendships together
 - Develop a baseline of Council activities
 - Training day could be optional
 - Workshops to help Council members who are new to this sphere of government
 - Learn how to write testimony
 - How to deliver testimony with mock testimony sessions that Council members can provide feedback on
 - Organizations that MYAC collaborates with
 - Workshops about the legislative session may be overwhelming at the first meeting
 - Help Council members who are new to advocacy
 - Meetings for committees to educate committee members on what the committee is going to look like for that Council year
- **Advocacy and events**
 - Looking at how we can get transportation for all Council members for events
 - Diversify where Council events are held
- **Communication and Outreach**
 - Centralized messaging would be helpful
 - Consider implementing platforms like BAND or reimplementing platforms like Slack or GroupMe
 - Guiding videos

- Make a video from all of the Council leadership, particularly exiting Council members, detailing roles, responsibilities, and how to enter these roles
 - Make a video of a Council member giving one tip of advice for first-year members
 - Be detailed, behind the scenes of MYAC, what we do outside of meetings, and what we can do outside of meetings
 - Make a Council manual detailing how the Council operates and answering frequently asked questions
 - Edit the position/roles document to expand on the duties and responsibilities of officer and executive board positions
 - Explore the use of social media platforms other than Instagram
 - Emphasize the fact that meetings are open to the public
 - Open the door to more workshop presenters and the presence of other young people
- **Opportunities and Council environment**
 - Consider having an accountability framework for Council members who do not come to meetings, respond to emails, etc
 - At the beginning of each meeting during ice breakers, there should be a question that includes what Council-related work members did in the interim
 - Council members might want to consider writing a report to share within their committees that can then be shared at general Council meetings
 - Consider regional mentorship – forming bonds between first and second-year members on the region or county level
 - Doing more activities as a group and hanging/more group bonding

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY?

- The grant application review process was fun!
- Advocacy Day in Annapolis with MENTOR MD|DC was super fun and allowed us to learn through the process of lobbying
 - Helped first-year members understand how they should testify on certain issues
 - Group bonding afterward allowed us to grow closer as a Council and become more comfortable with each other
 - Helped learn about the legislative process while actively being a part of it
 - A great opportunity to present to youth across the state and represent MYAC
- Community conversation
 - Meeting youth leaders from different counties, hearing various perspectives, and learning about networks that you wouldn't have been able to know otherwise was a highlight
 - Allowed Councilmembers to make connections within their communities
- Learning through meetings, being able to actively deep dive
- Taking the initiative on a MYAC presentation as a first-year member helped build a connection with the Council and St. Mary's County adult leaders
- Presenting to a regional student government to educate them about MYAC was really meaningful
- Seeing MYAC members present at the Maryland Civic Education Coalition Summit and seeing adults taking us seriously

- The Montgomery County youth town hall where members were able to facilitate discussions between Montgomery County students and legislators
- Getting random calls at midnight from legislative staff members, and got a call from Senator Kagan at 8 AM, highly personal interactions with legislators and members
- Serving on the Alpha-Kappa-Alpha chapter in Charles County on school safety and culture with Board of Education members and community leaders
- The 2023 HB119 press conference showed us that we have agency within our general assembly and that legislators care about what we have to say, to the extent that they will reach out to us first
- Seeing MYAC grow between these two years that we've served, a lot of doors are opening for MYAC and there is a strong support system
- Testifying in person at the state level was very exciting, members felt supported by each other