

Maryland Youth Advisory Council 2019-2020 Annual Report



August 31, 2020

Submitted by: Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth,
and Victim Services on behalf of the
Maryland Youth Advisory Council

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Letter From The Chair



On behalf of the Maryland Youth Advisory Council (MYAC), it is my absolute pleasure to present the Council's 2019-2020 Annual Report. The report has been developed by the members of the Council and represents the activities, events, and priorities of the Council during the 2019-2020 year. I would like to thank every speaker, partner, and all other persons that have contributed to the work of the Council. I would also like to thank all members of the Council, and our dedicated advisor, for their service, dedication, and enthusiasm in representing the youth of Maryland.

Noureen Badwi, Chair
Maryland Youth Advisory Council

Executive Summary

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council (the Council) has allowed for a diverse group of youth representing our State to voice their beliefs about legislation pertaining to youth and education as well as give feedback on various programs and program material that is meant to benefit the youth of Maryland. By taking on these leadership roles and putting actions to conviction, the Council has been able to make a valuable impact.

During the 2019-2020 Council year, members participated in various activities to voice their opinions and affect change:

- Held seven meetings, exceeding the required four meetings;
- Adopted Education as the legislative priority and additional sub-priorities;
- Attended and spoke on a panel at the Maryland United for Youth Conference;
- Provided feedback on youth-focused informational materials on vaping for the Maryland Dental Action Coalition and the Maryland Department of Health;
- Developed a proposal for a youth-focused vaping awareness project;
- Hosted a Results and Indicators focus group for youth;
- Supported changes in the Maryland State Department of Education’s Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) relating to LGBTQ+ youth and health education;
- Supported the formation of the Wicomico Youth Advisory Council; and
- Tracked and supported bills of interest, and provided written and oral testimony during the 2020 Legislative Session.

All meeting minutes and bill testimony are available upon request from the Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services - Children and Youth Division.



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.

Council members are 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 successor 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.

MISSION:

As a coalition of diverse young advocates and leaders from across the State, the Maryland Youth Advisory 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:

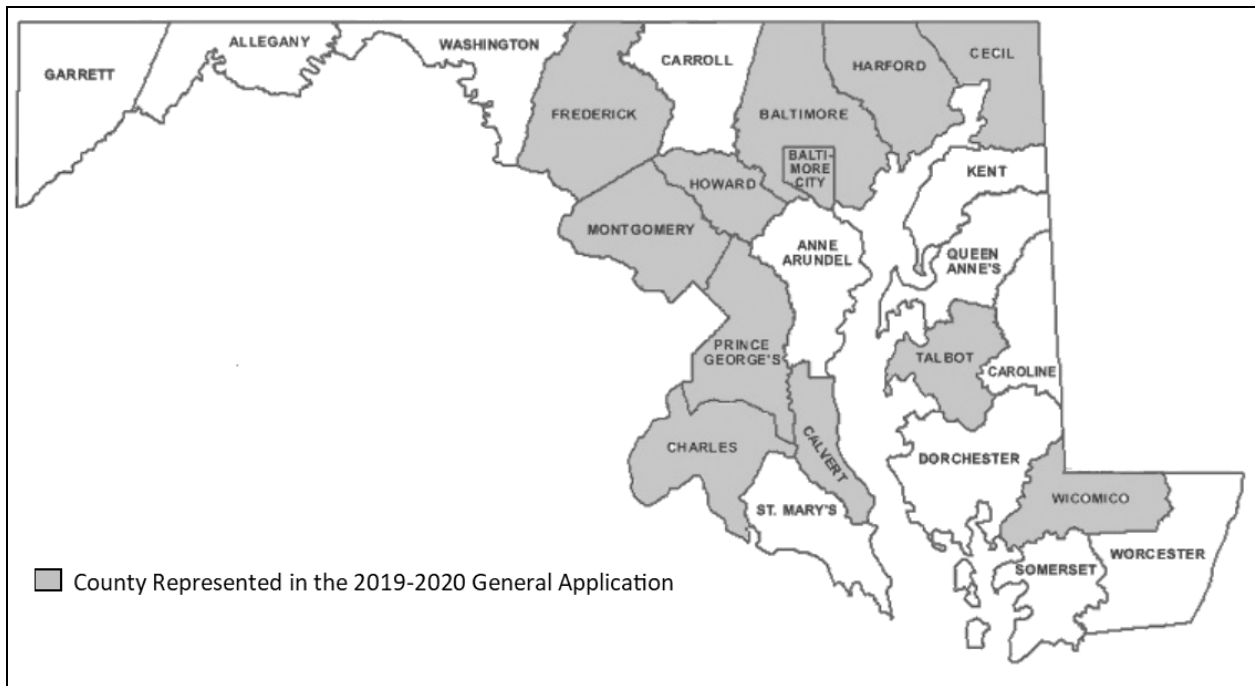
- Inform the Governor and the General Assembly of issues concerning youth, including offering testimony on these issues before legislative bodies;
- Examine issues of importance to youth, including: education, a safe learning environment, employment opportunities, strategies to increase youth participation 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;

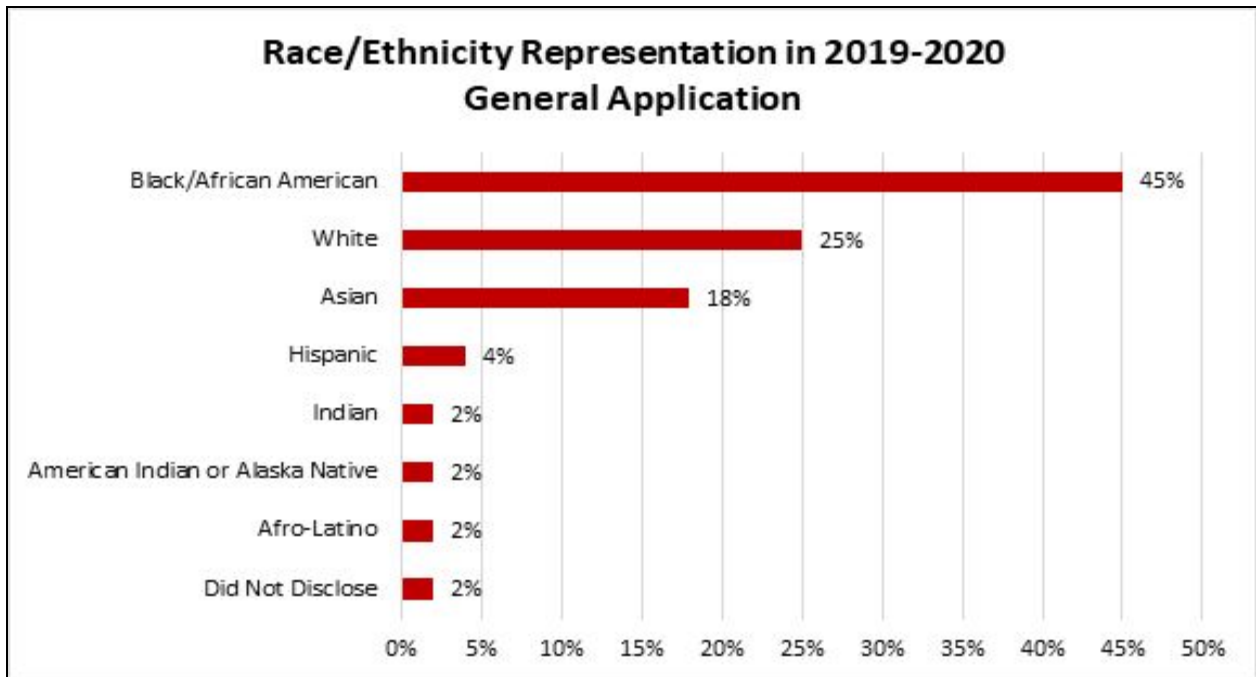
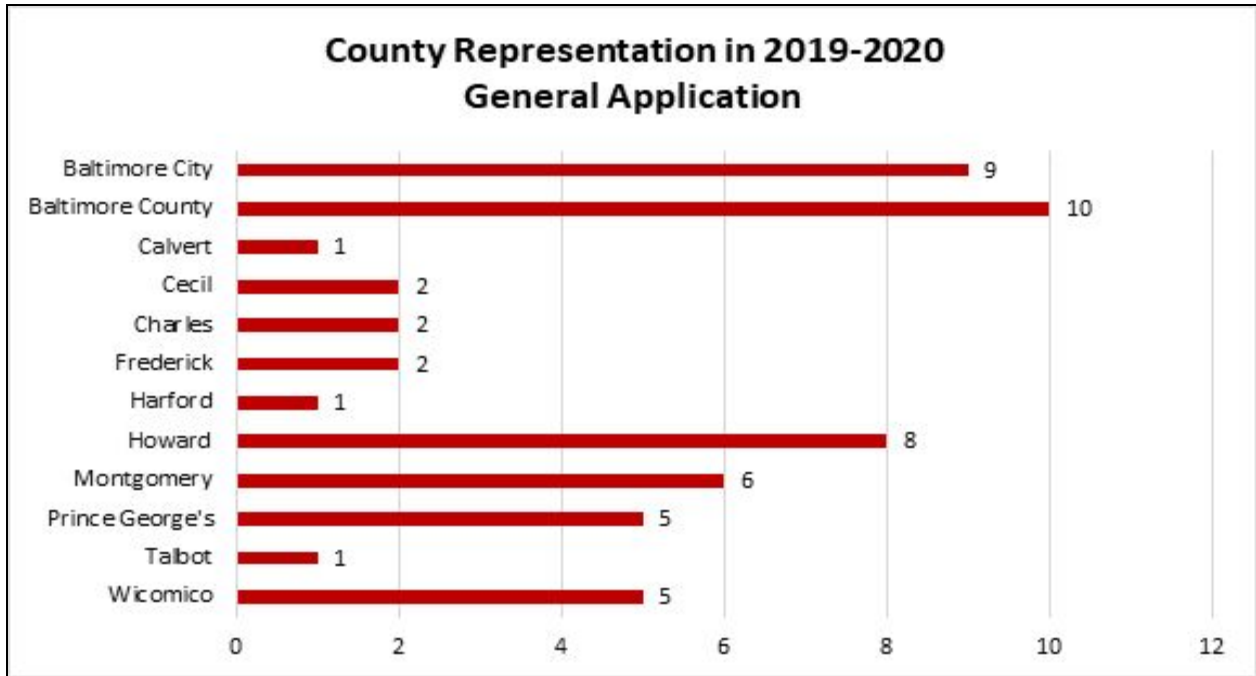
- Advise local officials and community leaders on youth issues;
- Collect information from other youth groups in order to inform the activities of the Council; and
- Report its activities to the Governor and General Assembly before the last day of the Council year.

2019-2020 Applications at a Glance

For the 2019-2020 term, applications were available online on the Council’s website from March 1, 2019 through July 1, 2019. Fifty-one (51) applications were received from youth in 12 counties, representing 42 high schools, colleges, and universities. Of these applicants, 59% were female, 41% were male. The majority of applicants were from Baltimore County. In addition, 73% of the applicants were identified as a person of color of which 45% were African American; however, 2% of the applicants did not disclose their race/ethnicity.

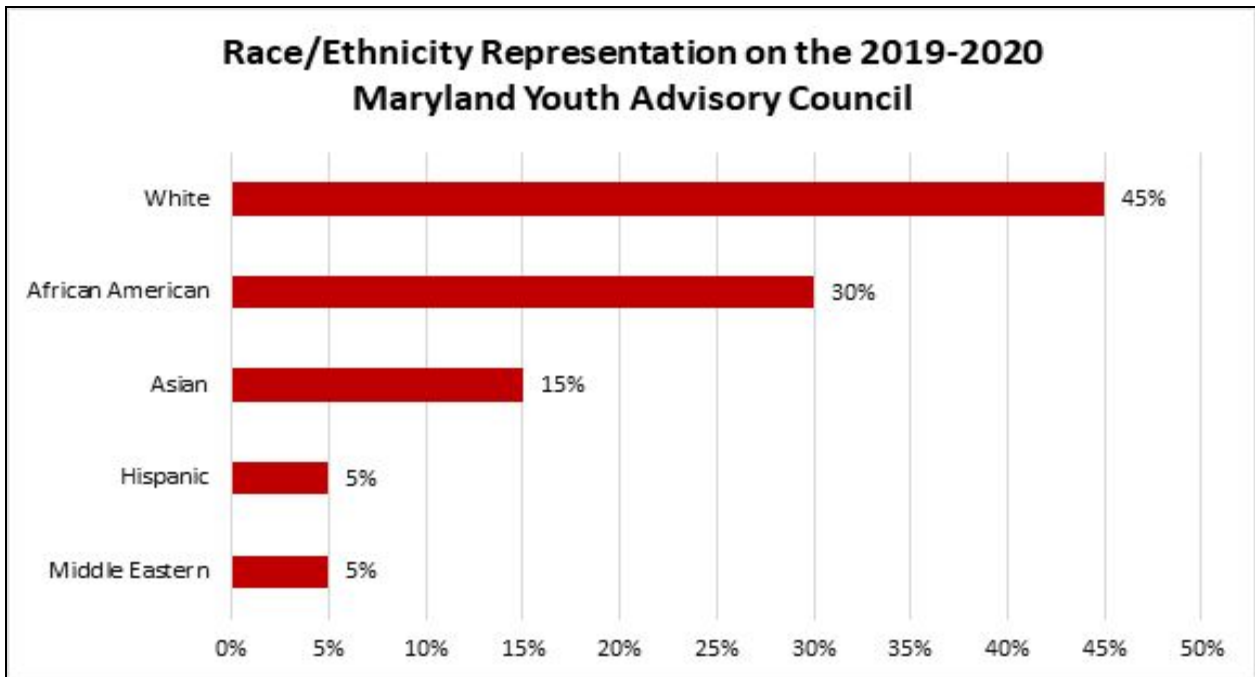
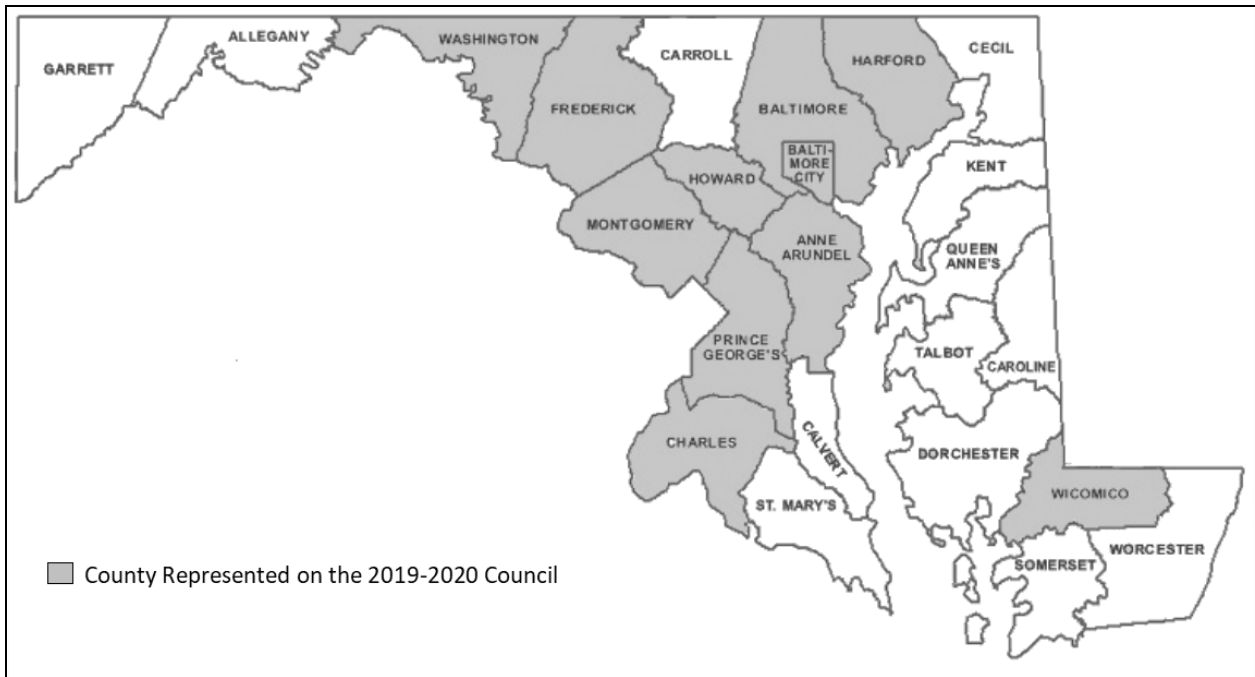
Applications were reviewed by Office staff and submitted recommendations for appointment to the appointing bodies as needed.





2019-2020 Council at a Glance

The 2019-2020 Council is composed of 20 members, representing 11 counties, 13 high schools, and four colleges/universities. The Council includes 11 (55%) females and nine (45%) males. Of the 20 members, seven are returning second-year members and 13 are first-year members. In addition, 55% of Council members identify as a person of color, with African Americans representing 30% of the Council.



2019-2020 Maryland Youth Advisory Council Roster

2019-2020 MARYLAND YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL EXECUTIVE BOARD (elected by Council members)

Chair: Noreen Badwi

Vice Chair: Carmelli Leal

Secretary: Aidan Douglas

Legislative Committee Chair: Ian Herd

Public Awareness Committee Chair: Crisaly De Los Santos

Executive Board Members: Benjamin Forrest, Jesse Harris, Jr., Marvin Li, Malachi Macon, Maya Matava, Alex Xhane

Historian: Maggie Harkins

Technology Officer: Kamri Gooding

APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR

Appointed in 2018

Aidan Douglas: Montgomery County - Seneca Valley High School

Appointed in 2019

Crisaly De Los Santos: Baltimore City - Baltimore City Community College

Kamri Gooding: Charles County - Maryland School for the Deaf - Frederick Campus

Maggie Harkins: Wicomico County - Parkside High School

APPOINTED BY THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Appointed in 2018

Kennedy Smith: Anne Arundel County - Annapolis High School

Sean Woolums: Anne Arundel County - University of Maryland Baltimore County

Appointed in 2019

Teresa Okello: Baltimore County - Randallstown High School

APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

Appointed in 2018

Noreen Badwi: Baltimore County - Towson High School

Appointed in 2019

Nina Bundy: Howard County - Towson University

Malachi Macon: Frederick County - Governor Thomas Johnson High School

Alex Xhane: Baltimore County - University of Maryland Baltimore County

NOMINATED BY THE MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT COUNCILS

Appointed in 2018

Ryan Blosser: Harford County - North Harford High School

Carmelli Leal: Baltimore County - Eastern Technical High School

Appointed in 2019

Jesse Harris, Jr.: Prince George's County - St. Mary's Ryken High School

Ian Herd: Charles County - La Plata High School

NOMINATED BY THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND STUDENT COUNCIL

Appointed in 2018

No appointments were made.

Appointed in 2019

Benjamin Forrest: Washington County - Frostburg State University

NOMINATED BY THE MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION—STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

Appointed in 2018

No appointments were made.

Appointed in 2019

No appointments were made.

NOMINATED BY THE MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL MANAGEMENT BOARDS

Appointed in 2018

Grace Acle: Wicomico County - James M. Bennett High School

Appointed in 2019

Zahra Allidina: Howard County - Oakland Mills High School

Marvin Li: Wicomico - James M. Bennett High School

Maya Matava: Wicomico - James M. Bennett High School

Council Meeting Overview

[Chapter 559 of 2008](#), [Chapter 69 of 2009](#), and [Chapter 620 of 2016](#) requires 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 2019-2020 term, the Council met in-person once a month from September to February. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the March meeting was held virtually and the April and May meetings were canceled and information was shared via email. Meetings were held on Saturday afternoons at the Governor's Coordinating Offices located in Crownsville, Maryland. All meeting dates, times, and locations are available on the Council's website at <https://goc.maryland.gov/myac/>.

MEETING #1: SEPTEMBER 7, 2019 (12:00 PM – 4:00 PM)

The Council kicked off the year with an invigorating icebreaker activity—members sharing with others what they were excited for, nervous about, and wanted to learn. While becoming acquainted with their fellow teammates, new and old members learned the ins and outs of the Council, member responsibilities, the legislative process, Maryland youth policy structure, and parliamentary procedures. Finally, the Council elected its Officers and Executive Board members and members opted to participate in either the Legislative or Public Awareness Committee.

MEETING #2: OCTOBER 12, 2019 (1:00 PM - 4:00 PM)

During the October meeting, the Council voted to support proposed education regulations to go before the State Board of Education for approval. The regulations are an opportunity to create a more equitable and inclusive education system and curriculum for LGBTQ+ students and their families. A letter of support was submitted to the State Board of Education.

MEETING #3: NOVEMBER 17, 2019 (11:00 AM – 1:00 PM)

During the November meeting, the three members who attended the Maryland United for Youth Conference shared their experiences with the Council. Members attended sessions on equity, trauma-informed practices, youth engagement, diversity and inclusion, two-generation approaches, and many other topic areas. The Council also approved Education as the legislative priority area of the year and the 2020 Legislative Session. The Council also developed sub-priorities to help focus the expansive area of Education. Finally, the Council discussed conducting research and providing information to the Maryland Department of Health regarding youth and vaping.

MEETING #4: DECEMBER 14, 2019 (1:00 PM – 4:00 PM)

The Council was joined by Kate Schechter from the Maryland Dental Action Coalition to provide additional feedback on the Coalition’s vaping infographic; members provided suggestions on the graphics and wording. In preparation for the 2020 Legislative Session, Andy Baranauskas, Legislative Affairs Manager with the Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services provided a legislative overview to the members. The Council also approved the Education sub-priorities and the legislative platform for the year.

MEETING #5: JANUARY 11, 2020 (1:00 PM – 4:00 PM)

During the January meeting, the Council discussed and voted on legislative bills. The Council was provided a recap of a Youth Engagement webinar for the Local Children’s Cabinet Network hosted by the Forum for Youth Investment. Noureen Badwi and Christina Drushel Williams, Council Advisor, discussed the importance of youth collaboration and how organizations and adult allies can support young people in policy and community change. Finally, Alanna Biblow, Coordinator of Health Communications Statewide Public Health Initiatives, for the Center for Tobacco Prevention and Control at the Maryland Department of Health, presented on young adult vaping prevention efforts in Maryland. The Council also provided feedback on campaign resources in development by the Department.

MEETING #6: FEBRUARY 15, 2020 (1:00 PM – 4:00 PM)

The Council discussed and voted on whether to support a number of bills presented during the Legislative Session. Following the approval of the new health education regulations in the Fall, the State Department of Education is reviewing the framework which will guide the new health education curriculum. Noreen Badwi participated in the workgroup and the Department of Education developed a survey for students to provide feedback on both the current and future health education curriculum.

MEETING #7: MARCH 14, 2020 (1:00 PM – 2:30PM)

In response to COVID-19 guidance, the March meeting was held virtually. The Council was provided updates on the abbreviated 2020 Legislative Session (which ended March 16, 2020). The members also discussed the newly released application for the 2020-2021 year and how the Council will provide outreach to young people interested in applying.

Committees

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

The Legislative Committee serves to identify bills that align with the Council's goals and advances youth objectives. Throughout the year, the Legislative Committee was able to bring many bills before the Council that aligned with this year's educational priority. The Legislative Committee was also tasked with doing additional research on bills and reporting back with their potential impacts on youth. As a result of the Legislative Committee's efforts, the Council was able to successfully advocate for several bills during the 2020 Legislative Session.

PUBLIC AWARENESS COMMITTEE

The Public Awareness Committee continued its efforts to expand the Council's online presence and examine ways to connect and engage with youth more effectively. Many ideas were discussed to expand the Council's online visibility and spread the word about the Council's mission.

2020 Legislative Session

LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

The Council focused on Education as its legislative priority during the 2020 Legislative Session. The Council also identified sub-priorities to focus the scope of Education in an effort to support legislation that bolsters the Council's ideals:

- *Educational equity,*
- *Financial literacy,*
- *Health education,*
- *Implementation of the Kirwan Commission recommendations,*
- *Life skills,*
- *Post-secondary opportunities, and*

- *Trauma-informed care.*

Although Education was the legislative priority for this year, throughout the Legislative Session the Council still identified and discussed bills outside of that scope that were relevant to the Council's wider objectives and legislative platform.

2020 LEGISLATIVE BILLS

Over the course of the 2020 Legislative Session, the Council provided written and/or oral testimony for the following bills:

[HB 1300 / SB 1000 - Blueprint for Maryland's Future](#)

Action: The Council provided both written and oral testimony for this bill.

Outcome: The Blueprint for Maryland's Future passed in both chambers, but was vetoed by the Governor.

[HB 1204 / SB 993 - County Boards and Public and Nonpublic Prekindergarten Programs and Schools - Discrimination - Prohibition](#)

Action: The Council provided written testimony for this bill.

Outcome: This bill passed in the House but did not advance beyond the first reading in the Senate before the General Assembly adjourned.

[HB 883 - Frederick County Board of Education - Student Member](#)

Action: The Council provided oral testimony for this bill.

Outcome: The bill did not move beyond the House Ways and Means Committee following its hearing.



Other Meetings, Events, and Activities

MARYLAND UNITED FOR YOUTH CONFERENCE AND YOUTH PANEL



On November 4 and 5, 2019, the Maryland Out of School Time Network and Maryland Mentor hosted the Maryland United for Youth Conference. Three members of the Council, Noureen Badwi, Council Chair; Carmelli Leal, Council Vice-Chair; and Maggie Harkins, Council Historian had the opportunity to attend this conference with the Council’s Advisor, Christina Drushel Williams, to engage in workshops, network with professionals working for Maryland youth, and speak on a youth panel. Council members learned about the perspectives of adults working with youth and gave insight on how to better engage with youth. Below are reflections from the members’ experience at the conference:

Noureen Badwi

“As a part of the panel, we were able to speak truth to power to the importance of meaningful engagement of young people. From cementing the idea that youth, like many marginalized demographics, have been generationally put down, deemed inferior to their adult counterparts, and not included at the table, to sharing ways that youth can be engaged in meaningful and effective ways. The conversation was well-received and I think that the conference and the panel was an example of how important it is to bridge the divide between youth and adults.”

Carmelli Leal

“This conference was for sure a valuable experience. Obviously being a young person myself, I experience the youth perspective constantly; I live it. Until now, I haven’t had much of a chance to truly understand the perspective of adults working with youth. Now that I have, I’m able to see where the disconnect is between the two. It can often be attributed to generational differences, adultism, and lack of vulnerability on both parts. It was refreshing to see everyone at the conference acknowledge this disconnect and be very receptive to the youth opinion on how to ameliorate this issue.”

Maggie Harkins

“Before being appointed to the Council, I had never really been exposed to youth inclusion at the state level. Being from Wicomico county, I can at times, feel disconnected from many of the few opportunities

youth have to be involved. Basically, anything important happens across the bridge and is a three hour drive away. Obviously because I am young right now I have many opinions on how we are treated and how we are included in all aspects of policy making. It's one thing for adults to hear, "Youth are feeling marginalized," or "the young people aren't being heard" from a speaker or an article, but when there are actual young people in front of them, saying how they really feel and offering real solutions, it gives them a different perspective."

VAPING CAMPAIGN MATERIALS REVIEW

During the 2018-2019 Council year, Ms. Drushel Williams was contacted by Kate Schechter from the Maryland Dental Action Coalition who was looking for an opportunity to learn from youth and young adults about dental health routines, general oral health knowledge, and experiences with dental health professionals. This resulted in the creation of a youth-focused infographic, which was later presented to the Council for their review. As a result of this collaboration, the Coalition featured a segment in its newsletter to emphasize the benefits of working with youth. The article, expressing the importance of youth engagement, was drafted and posted in the Coalition's February 2020 Newsletter. The Coalition planned to host a Statewide health summit in the month of June (2020) with a youth-focused session; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the summit has been canceled or postponed to a later date.

The Maryland Department of Health has various public awareness materials that provide information on the evolution of tobacco products, the dangers associated with the use of tobacco, the relationship between vaping and addiction in youth, as well as the various kinds of vaping products that exist. These materials were presented to the Council at their meeting held on January 11, 2020, by Ms. Biblow, the Coordinator of Health Communications Statewide Public Health Initiatives at the Center for Tobacco Prevention and Control, for the purpose of receiving feedback and suggestions from the Council.

VAPING PROPOSAL

At the start of the 2019-2020 Council year, the Council was informed of an opportunity to create a project and grant proposal to help mitigate the prevalence of vaping among Maryland youth. The proposal included five action items/areas:

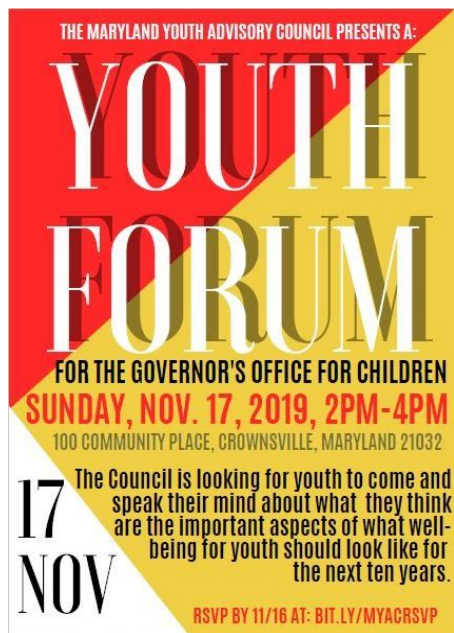
1. Creating a public awareness campaign;
2. Hosting a campaign launch event;
3. Hosting a World No Tobacco Awareness Day Event;
4. Attending the 4th Annual E-Cigarette Summit in Washington D.C.; and
5. Supporting local efforts through small subgrants.

The Council will work with the Maryland Department of Health and the Office to collaborate and identify funding opportunities to support this project.

RESULTS AND INDICATORS WORKGROUP AND YOUTH FOCUS GROUP

For more than 20 years, the Maryland Children's Cabinet has utilized the Results-Based Accountability™ framework to focus planning, decision-making, and budgeting on desired results and outcomes for Maryland's children, youth, and families. Nearly every 10 years, the Office and its stakeholders review the Results and Indicators to ensure they reflect the current needs of Maryland's children, youth, and

families. In 2019, the Children’s Cabinet formed a workgroup to conduct this review process and included agency and local partners. Noreen Badwi, Council Chair, participated in the workgroup, attended regular meetings, and provided feedback on behalf of Maryland’s youth.



The Council also hosted a youth focus group to provide an opportunity for young people to provide their feedback not just on the proposed results and indicators, but on the general priority areas relating to well-being. The Council hosted the focus group on November 17, 2019, from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m., at the Governor’s Coordinating Offices in Crownsville, Maryland. The members provided an overview of the Results-Based Accountability Framework and the current results and indicators. The participants were then guided through a prioritization process which included considerations for:

- **Communication Power:** The indicator communicates to a broad and diverse audience.
- **Proxy Power (or Representative Power):** The indicator says something of central importance about the result.
- **Data Power:** Data for this indicator is available on a timely basis and is reliable and consistent.

The results of the focus group along with a public survey were shared with the workgroup members for consideration in the finalization of recommendations that were presented to the Children’s Cabinet Implementation Team and then the Children’s Cabinet. Both groups reviewed the compiled recommendations that were approved by the Children’s Cabinet at its meeting on June 17, 2020.

EDUCATION REGULATIONS (LGBTQ+ EQUITY AND HEALTH EDUCATION)

The Council supported changes in Maryland State Department of Education’s Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) by repealing [13A.04.05. - Education That is Multicultural](#) and replacing it with [13A.01.06 - Educational Equity](#). Specifically, the Council was supportive of approving changes in COMAR [13A.01.06 - .03 Definitions](#), which now defines sexual orientation and gender identity and expression as individual characteristics. The proposed regulation goes several important steps further than its predecessor, Education That is Multicultural. This regulation outlines a blueprint for achieving true excellence in equity in education for all students, all families, all communities, and all Marylanders.

Additionally, the Council supported [COMAR 13A.04.18.01 - Comprehensive Health Education Instructional Programs for Grades Prekindergarten—12](#). This regulation mandates that family life and human sexuality instruction represent all students regardless of ability, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. The regulation goes on to require additional preparation for teaching family life and human sexuality. These two components of the regulation ensure inclusive and equitable access in health education, as well as accuracy and quality of the instruction.

Finally, the Council urged the Board to amend the language found under [.01 Comprehensive Health Education Instructional Programs for Grades Prekindergarten—12](#) in section D.(2)(b) which states that “teaching shall emphasize that refraining from sexual activity is the best method to avoid sexually

transmitted infections, including HIV, and unintended pregnancy.” The Council believes that focusing primarily on abstinence is not providing students with adequate knowledge of contraception to make informed decisions regarding safe sexual activity and reducing harmful risks. The Council requests an emphasis on medically accurate forms of contraception, including refraining from sexual activity, as methods to avoid sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and unintended pregnancy.

The State Board of Education approved the changes to the regulations as proposed.

SUPPORTING THE WICOMICO YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

An initiative spearheaded by Wicomico County youth, including the Council’s very own Grace Acle, to create the Wicomico Youth Advisory Council was unanimously supported by the Council. The Council wrote a letter to the Wicomico County Executive, Bob Culver, encouraging his favorable signing of the Executive Order approved by the County Commission. In January 2020, County Executive Culver signed an Executive Order creating the Wicomico Youth Advisory Council. The Council looks forward to the Wicomico Youth Advisory Council’s future success and the emergence of more local level youth councils and commissions in Maryland.