

Maryland Youth Advisory Council

2024-2025 Annual Report



August 31, 2025

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

Contact: Mysiki Valentine
mysiki.valentine@maryland.gov

MSAR #10854

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	1
Letter From The Chair	2
Executive Summary	3
Background and Mission of the Council	4
2024-2025 Applications at a Glance	5
2024-2025 Council Meeting Overview	9
Council Committees	12
Legislative Committee	12
Public Awareness Committee	17
Youth Grants Opportunities (YGO) Committee	19
Other Committees, Programs and Partnerships	20
What's New With MYAC	24
Memories, Words of Wisdom and Acknowledgment	25

Letter From The Chair

It is with immense pride and gratitude that I present the Annual Report of the Maryland Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) for the 2024-2025 term. This year has been a testament to the power of youth voice and the unwavering commitment of our council members to serve the young people of Maryland.

Over the past year, MYAC has engaged in critical discussions and advocated for policies that directly address the needs of **our peers across Maryland**. Through our monthly meetings and dedicated committee work, each member has devoted countless hours to ensuring that the diverse perspectives of Maryland's **youth are heard** and acted upon.

We tackled a range of pressing issues, from mental health access and educational equity to environmental sustainability and civic engagement. Our legislative efforts during the 2025 session saw us championing bills that we believe will create a more equitable and supportive environment for all young Marylanders. We also continued our vital Youth Grants Opportunity, empowering youth-led projects across the state and fostering a spirit of community leadership.

This report outlines the significant achievements of the 2024-2025 Council, highlights our key initiatives, and provides recommendations for the incoming 2025-2026 Council.

I extend my deepest appreciation to my fellow council members for their dedication and effort. Your commitment to making a tangible difference in the lives of young Marylanders is truly inspiring. I also want to thank the Governor's Office for Children staff for their **unwavering support**.

As I reflect on my time as Chair, I am filled with optimism for the future of Maryland's youth. The talent, resilience, and innovative spirit I have witnessed within this council assure me that our state is in capable hands. I am confident that the next generation of leaders will continue to advocate for positive change and shape a brighter future for our beloved state.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alexander Hossainkhail".

Alexander Hossainkhail
Chair, Maryland Youth Advisory Council

Executive Summary

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) **amplifies the voices of young people statewide by advising on youth-focused legislation, shaping statewide programs, resources, and directly guiding strategic investments in youth-serving initiatives.** Council members, who reflect Maryland's full diversity, also forge and cultivate partnerships with government agencies, community organizations, and private stakeholders—working together to channel resources where they are most needed and advance policies that drive meaningful, youth-centered change across the state.

During the 2024-2025 term, members participated in various activities to voice their opinions and impact the community: *(in chronological order)*

- Held **10 monthly hybrid meetings between the months of Sept - June** exceeding the mandated four meetings;
- Incorporated the **Moore-Miller Administration's ENOUGH Theory of Action** into MYAC's legislative priorities, and grant and application processes
- Brought together **over 50 young people from across the state to participate in MYAC's annual Community Conversation**, working with the Council to select and prioritize legislative objectives;
- **Moved office of operations from Crownsville to Annapolis** bridging proximity to lawmakers and GOC staff;
- Adopted four (4) connected legislative priorities: **Education and Resource Equity; Mental Health Services and Support; Safe Schools and Community Spaces; and Social Justice;**
- Scheduled and conducted over 20 individual and group meetings with key legislators to advance key priorities such as the **Blueprint for MD Future** and **voting rights for youth members of the student board**;
- Tracked and supported bills of interest, and **provided written and oral testimony** during the 2025 legislative session;
- Co-led **Youth Advocacy Day, in partnership with the Maryland Out of School Time Network (MOST)** virtually training over 100 young people on ways to engage and advocate to the General Assembly;
- **Enhanced the Youth Grant Opportunities Initiative**—an open call for up to five youth-led organizations to receive up to \$1,000 each—by aligning the grantmaking process with ENOUGH community priorities and implementing targeted strategies to eliminate child poverty and promote economic mobility;
- Expanded new partnerships with the **University of Maryland, The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, American University, and the Maryland Civic Education Coalition**; and
- Strengthened current partnerships with Local Management Boards (Frederick, Baltimore City and Washington County), Maryland Out of School Time (MOST) Network, and MENTOR MD|DC.

Meeting minutes are available on the MYAC webpage [here](#).

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 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 between 14–22 years of age and serve a two-year term.

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: As outlined in statute, the Council is required to:

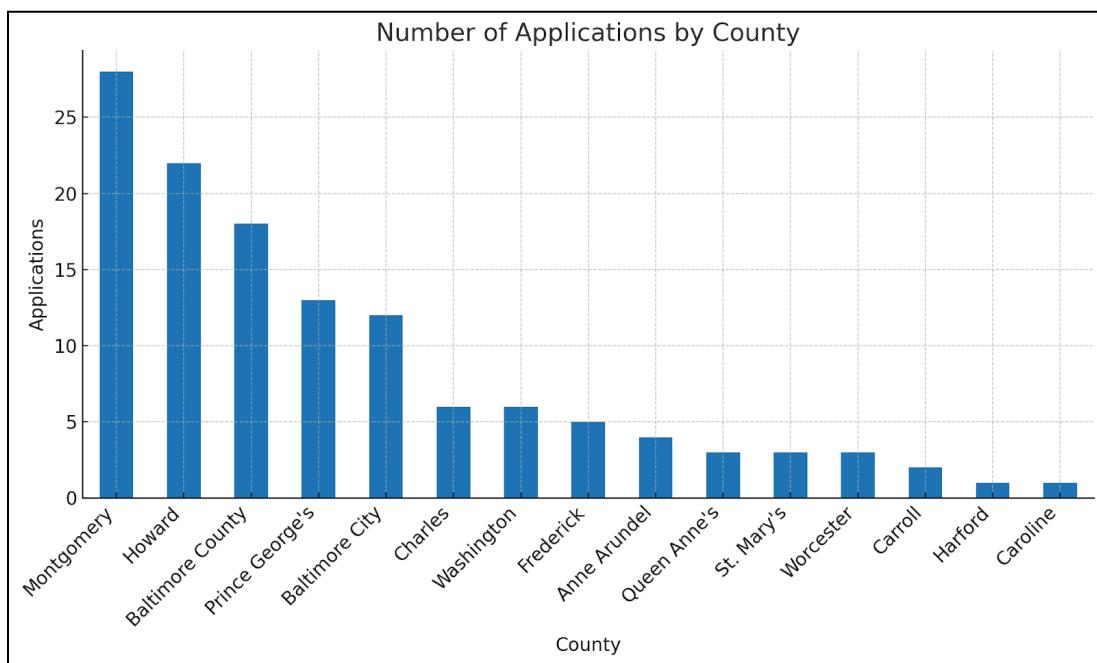
- Inform the Governor and the General Assembly of issues concerning youth, including offering testimony on these issues before legislative bodies;
- Examine issues of importance to youth, including education, a safe learning environment, employment opportunities, strategies to increase youth participation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

2024-2025 Applications at a Glance

The 2024-2025 application period was from March 1 - June 30, 2024, and garnered **127 total applications** from young people representing **14 different counties**. Young people submitted application forms and supporting documents, including resumes and reference letters via the Governor's Office for Children website.

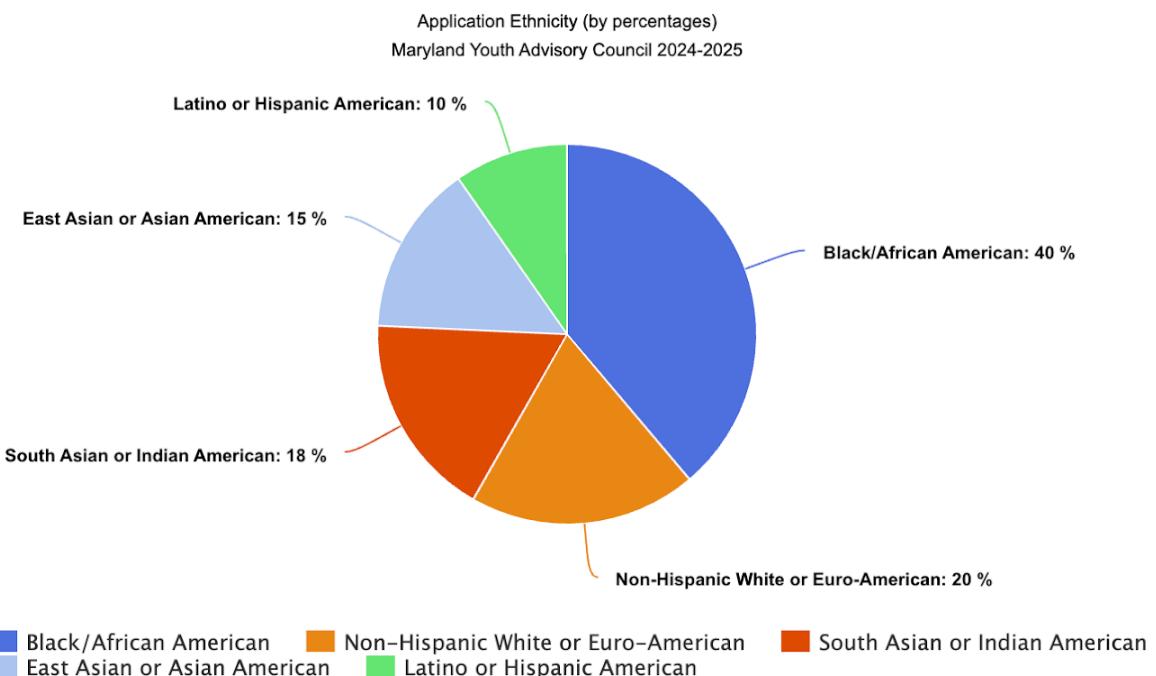
MYAC received the largest number of applicants from **Montgomery** with 26 applicants (representing 21% of all applications), **Howard** with 21 applicants (representing 16% of all applications) and **Baltimore County** with 15 applicants (representing 12% of all applications). While there is limited Eastern Shore representation by current members, there were 7 total applicants (representing 5%) from **Caroline, Queen Anne's, and Worcester County**.



The Council **aims to reflect the gender, racial, ethnic, geographic, and other diversity of Maryland's youth statewide**. Members value different perspectives, backgrounds and experiences and know these differences allow the Council to prosper and continue to be a safe space for all young people.

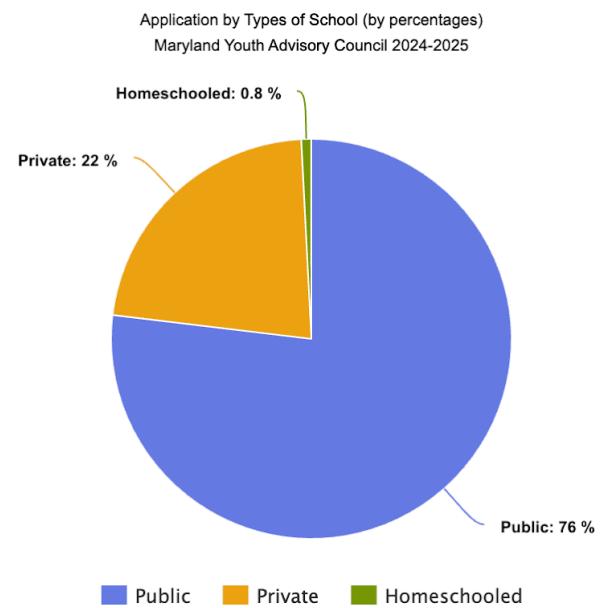
During the 2024–2025 application period, **Black/African American** applicants made up the largest group, accounting for about 40% (53 applicants). Non-Hispanic **White or**

Euro-American applicants comprised 20% (25). Asian communities followed, with **South Asian or Indian American** at 18% (22) and **East Asian or Asian American** at 15% (19). **Latino or Hispanic American** applicants represented 10% (13).



Young people across Maryland pursue their education in diverse settings, including public, private, and home schools. **Considering school type allows the Council to capture a fuller range of student experiences, from differences in access to resources and extracurriculars to the ways education policies impact each setting.**

This data point also ensures that students from varied socioeconomic, cultural, and geographic backgrounds are represented, strengthening the Council's ability to reflect and respond to the needs of all Maryland youth.



2024-2025 Maryland Youth Advisory Council Roster

The work of MYAC is driven by a **strong governance structure that promotes accountability, collaboration, and leadership development**. All appointed members serve two-year terms, ensuring the Council benefits from experienced members who coach, guide, and support new members. This year, MYAC continued to foster peer learning and mentorship by pairing first year members with experienced second-year members, enabling members to develop skills in legislative advocacy, project management, and public speaking. Through these leadership opportunities, MYAC ensures that its members are equipped not only to serve the Council effectively but also to carry their leadership skills into their future endeavors.

Per statute §9-2701(f), “*at the first meeting of each Council year, MYAC members elect their Chair—who serves for one year—and elect an Executive Board.*”

- The Executive Board is composed of six members, selected as follows:
- Two members appointed by the President of the Senate or the Speaker of the House;
- Two members appointed by the Governor or nominated by the Local Management Boards;
- One member nominated by the Maryland Association of Student Councils; and
- One member nominated by the University System of Maryland Student Council or the Maryland Higher Education Commission Student Advisory Council.

In addition, **the Executive Board can include titled officer positions: Vice Chair, Secretary, Public Awareness Committee Chair, Legislative Committee Chair, Historian, and Parliamentarian**. The Council may appoint any other officers it considers necessary.

During the first meeting, interested members present a short announcement of intent, and prepare a speech for their fellow peers. The Council votes, in real-time, to elect the six members of the Executive Board. At the discretion of the new Chairperson and Committee Chairs, additional members are added to the executive board serving as **committee co-chairs, temporary committee chairs for special projects or programs**. These additional board members provide administrative and operational support to the Council as well.

APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR

Appointed in 2023

Thomas Evans, Frederick County - Mount Saint Joseph High School

Appointed in 2024

Qamryn Askew, Baltimore City - Baltimore Polytechnic Institute
Taryn Clemons, Baltimore County - Morgan State University
David Renderos, Montgomery County - Montgomery College

APPOINTED BY THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Appointed in 2023

No appointments were made

Appointed in 2024

O'Marie Barnes, Prince George's County - Crossland High School

Kevin Jones, Charles County - La Plata High School

Foresight Ogungbe, Baltimore County - Eastern Technical High School

Lucia Zaklin, Queen Anne's County - Kent Island High School

APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

Appointed in 2023

Alexander Hossainkhail, Anne Arundel County - University of Maryland, College Park

Rishi Sheth, St. Mary's County - Great Mills High School

Appointed in 2024

Aarna Chakarvarty, Frederick County - Urbana High School

Joyce Yun, Howard County - Glenelg Country School

NOMINATED BY THE MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT COUNCILS

Appointed in 2023

Shradha Bista, Washington County - North Hagerstown High School

Alessia Cuba, Frederick County - Urbana High School

Appointed in 2024

Izzah Khan Charles County - The Calverton School

Lorena Wu Montgomery County - Poolesville High School

NOMINATED BY THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND STUDENT COUNCIL

Appointed in 2023

No appointments were made

Appointed in 2024

Graham Snyder: Washington County - University of Maryland, College Park

Jefferson Vasquez-Reyes: Prince George's County - University of Maryland, College Park

NOMINATED BY THE MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION—STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

Appointed in 2024

No appointments were made

NOMINATED BY THE MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL MANAGEMENT BOARDS

Appointed in 2023

Folashade Epebinu: Montgomery County - University of Maryland, College Park

Diana Flores: Carroll County - Carroll Community College

Zaria Naqvi: Montgomery County - Winston Churchill High School

Appointed in 2024

Alex Mayen-Velasquez: Carroll County - Century High School

2024-2025 MARYLAND YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL EXECUTIVE BOARD (elected by Council members):

Chair: Alexander Hossainkhail

Vice Chair: Thomas Evans

Secretary: Folashade Epebinu

Legislative Committee Chair: Zaria Naqvi

Public Awareness Committee Chair: Rishi Sheth

Historian: Joyce Yun (*appointed by Chair*)

Executive Board Members: Shradha Bista, Graham Snyder (*appointed by Chair*)

2024-2025 Council Meeting Overview

Statute requires the Council to meet at least four (4) times each year and each meeting must be open to the public. However, the Council determined that meeting only four (4) 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 2024-2025 term, the Council held hybrid meetings once a month from September to June. Meetings were held on Saturday afternoons in Crownsville and Annapolis. All meeting dates and times are available on the [Council's website](#).



MEETING #1: SEPTEMBER 14, 2024: The first Council meeting of the year began with welcoming remarks and an engaging introduction activity to foster connections among new and returning members and the new and former advisor. Members then engaged in an advocacy-related team-building activity before diving into presentations on the Council and member responsibilities, MYAC's legislative priorities and platform, and Maryland state youth policy. Following the presentations were the annual elections for the year's leadership team and committee selections. The meeting concluded with a learning segment on MYAC email templates for outreach, followed by announcements and next steps.

annual elections for the year's leadership team and committee selections. The meeting concluded with a learning segment on MYAC email templates for outreach, followed by announcements and next steps.

MEETING #2: OCTOBER 19, 2024: The second Council meeting of the year began with welcoming remarks and a review of the agenda. Members then engaged in a review and reflection of the ENOUGH Act and youth statewide assessment data. Following the reflections was a roll call and vote on meeting location change. Additionally, the Chair and committee chairs shared updates and future plans. Members then engaged in a planning session on the logistics of the upcoming Community Conversation. The Chair then reviewed the Council's leadership structure and outlined the communication and decision-making structures. The meeting concluded with a brief overview of the mileage reimbursement forms, followed by announcements and next steps.



MEETING #3: NOVEMBER 23, 2024: At the third MYAC Council meeting of the year, members received updates on Council business, and prepared for the upcoming Community Conversation. The meeting featured an informative presentation on the Maryland General Assembly, equipping members with knowledge about the legislative process. Council members also reviewed and refined the Community Conversation agenda, suggesting improvements to discussion formats, feedback methods, and event logistics. The group shared reflections on their motivations for joining MYAC, emphasizing advocacy and impact, and received updates on potential partnerships, grant opportunities, and town hall planning. The meeting concluded with announcements, reminders about next steps, and an adjournment.



MEETING #4: DECEMBER 7, 2024: At the December MYAC meeting, members gathered primarily in person to finalize preparations for the Community Conversation. The Council set up the venue, created welcome materials, and ensured all technical aspects were ready. The Community Conversation featured small and large group discussions where youth across the state addressed pressing issues like the opioid crisis, mental health, school safety, and budget deficits. The event concluded with a share-out of discussion takeaways and insights from MYAC's analysis team, connecting the conversation to future advocacy efforts. After cleanup and informal member interactions, the Council voted to postpone the event debrief to a later meeting.



MEETING #5: JANUARY 18, 2025: The January meeting included a guest presentation from the *GOC ENOUGH Director, Pickett Slater-Harrington* on the Governor's statewide ENOUGH Initiative to address child poverty and increase economic mobility for youth across Maryland. Following the presentation, the group discussed the establishment of the Youth Grants Committee to lead the annual MYAC grant program. The Legislative Committee led a workshop on how members can provide written and oral testimony during the legislative session. Members then voted on bills recommended by the Legislative Committee. The meeting concluded with testimony practice, committee breakouts, and next steps.

MEETING #6: FEBRUARY 15, 2025: The meeting began with a warm welcome to all members, with a special introduction of MYAC's newest member, *Jefferson Vasquez-Reyes*, followed by a success roll-call—where members highlight their accomplishments and the Council celebrates them. Council business was then discussed, including roll call, chair updates, and committee updates. The group reviewed and voted on several bills shared by the Legislative Committee before moving into a conversation about proposed by-law revisions. After this discussion, the Council briefly prepared for the MYAC 2025-2026 application info sessions. The meeting concluded with final reminders about Advocacy Day and adjournment.



MEETING #7: MARCH 8, 2025: The meeting began with welcoming remarks, followed by Council updates, including roll call, chair updates, and committee updates. Next, the Council reviewed, discussed, and approved proposed by-law changes. The Youth Grant Committee provided an overview of the application process, followed by presentations from the youth grant finalists. After the presentations, the Council discussed the presentations and selected the final grant recipients. The meeting concluded with final reminders about upcoming events and adjournment.

MEETING #8: APRIL 26, 2025: The meeting began with welcoming remarks, followed by Council business which included roll call, chair updates, legislative updates, and public awareness reports. Next, updates on the MYAC application were provided, followed by a discussion about the collaboration between MYAC and the University of Maryland Center for Democracy and Civic Engagement. Members then dispersed into committee and workgroup breakouts to collaborate on ongoing projects and initiatives. The meeting concluded with announcements, updates, and adjournment.

MEETING #9: MAY 17, 2025: During the May meeting, MYAC finalized plans for the upcoming Hagerstown Youth Town Hall, including the development of outreach strategies to promote the event to youth in the Washington County area. In addition, council members received updates on the MYAC application outreach process and launched the MYAPP Competition, a new initiative encouraging members to promote the application and increase engagement through a friendly, prize-driven challenge. Finally, the Council prepared for the



upcoming End-of-Year Roundtable with *Special Secretary Carmel Martin* and the GOC staff.



MEETING #10: JUNE 17, 2025: The final meeting of the 2024-2025 MYAC term culminated in an End-of-Year Roundtable Event with the GOC. Council members presented a summary of their achievements in the past term, and discussed how to increase opportunities for council members to engage more in advocacy. Additionally, the Council discusses ways in which GOC can provide more flexibility in the operational support of members, including a streamlined gas reimbursement process, member transportation support, the allocation of MYAC Youth Grant funds. The Council also presented a brief overview of the legislative testimony provided in the 2025 session and spoke about the Annapolis 101, a current partnership with the University of Maryland. Finally, the Council provided additional suggestions for improvement and collaboration from the 2025-2026 term. The meeting adjourned with MYAC's first alumni induction ceremony.

Council Committees

Legislative Committee

This year's Legislative Committee, led by *Chair Zaria Naqvi* and *Co-Chair Shradha Bista*, built a strong foundation for MYAC's legislative engagement by establishing a clear understanding of the Maryland General Assembly (MDGA) processes, leadership structures, and the Council's historical influence on state policy-making. The Committee strengthened internal communications through stable channels for bill updates, meeting reminders, and streamlined tracking methods. A dedicated communication group was created for real-time legislative notifications, and frequent working sessions—both independent and during full Council meetings—ensured continuous readiness for the legislative session.



Pre-Session Preparation: There is much preparation to ensure every council member is aware of the advocacy and education strategies used to engage with the Maryland General Assembly.

In preparation for the 2025 legislative session, the Committee:

- **Established Council-wide legislative priorities** informed by youth concerns from the annual Community Conversation. The 2024-2025 legislative priorities were:
 1. Education and Resource Equity
 2. Mental Health, Services and Support
 3. Safe School and Community Spaces

4. Social Justice
- **Developed and delivered a Maryland General Assembly 101 presentation** for new members, covering state policy-making procedures, the MDGA structure, and Council-MDGA interaction points.
- **Conducted testimony workshops** for council members to learn how to email law makers, deliver verbal testimony, submit written testimony and scenario-based learning.
- **Contacted Maryland legislators** with introductory emails outlining MYAC's mission and seeking collaboration, resulting in ~45 legislative meetings before and during the session.

2025 Legislative Priorities During the 2024-2025 session, the Legislative Committee spearheaded the development of a legislative platform to consolidate the views of the Council. The platform spans seven broad subjects: **Education and Resource Equity, Mental Health, Services, and Support, Safe School and Community Spaces and Social Justice.**

The platform of priorities allows the Council to share its views and recommendations for Maryland through a central, easy-to-follow document. The platform also 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.

Priority #1 Education and Resource Equity

- I. Access to Learning Opportunities
 - A. Expand advanced education, technical education, and vocational programs.
 - B. Bridge achievement gaps to ensure youth from diverse backgrounds can access high-level education and career guidance.
- II. Equity in the Quality of Educational Facilities
 - A. Address disproportionate funding in and across districts to ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities.
- III. Staff and Student Education on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Developing Technology
 - A. Enhance and define classroom practices to teach appropriate and relevant uses of AI.
 - B. Guide educators in balancing the integration of AI in classrooms effectively, ensuring it supports learning without replacing critical teaching elements.

Priority #2 Mental Health, Services, and Support

- I. Substance Prevention and Awareness
 - A. Prevention and reduction, including therapy, phone lines and educational programs for young and youth adults.
- II. Increasing Mental Health Resources
 - A. Increase the effectiveness of programs, and better integrate counselors and Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs) in schools.

III. Youth Mentorship

- A. Implement programs to educate parents, adults, and other caretakers to refine mentoring roles, matching modern day needs such as employment pipelines, and family services.

Priority #3 Safe School and Community Spaces

I. Reducing School and Community Violence

- A. Increase professional development opportunities for educators and school personnel to recognize signs of violence and employ preventative measures.
- B. Prevention, not Reaction: Identify proactive and preventative models to reduce student disciplinary instances.

II. Developing Third Spaces for Students

- A. Support environments for students to remain engaged outside of school environments.
 - 1. Third spaces look at other youth centric places for children to be, beyond parks and playgrounds – to youth halls, youth towns, kitchens and campuses.
- B. Ensure that youth are involved in community groups and spaces.

Priority #4 Social Justice

I. Restorative Justice Practices Towards Conflict Resolution

- A. Address youth and young adults physical, mental, and verbal harm inflicted on individuals and communities.
- B. Promote accountability practices; such as peer deescalation, shared restorative frameworks.
- C. Apply through in schools and criminal justice systems.

II. Introducing and Increasing Youth Civic Engagement

- A. Promote programs that uplift civics and service excellence.
- B. Standardize civics into school curriculums.

Bill Tracking and Analysis: To stay informed and engaged in Maryland's legislative process, MYAC's Legislative Committee tracked bills throughout the session, analyzing their potential impact on youth and communities. Members researched legislation, prepared summaries, and determined alignment with Council priorities. This process ensured partners, legislators, and young people remain updated on key policy developments.

From January to April 2025, the Legislative Committee:

- **Updated the bill-tracking spreadsheet weekly**, with each member adding a minimum of two bills per month.
- Tracked and analyzed **over 60 bills across MYAC's priority areas**, some including:
 - **School & Community Safety** (HB0283 Safe Neighborhoods Pilot Program, HB0756 Safe Schools Fund)
 - **Student Rights** (HB0052 Your School, Your Voice Act, HB0184 Prohibition on Punitive Measures Related to Student Debt)
 - **Mental Health** (SB36 9-8-8 Suicide Prevention Hotline, HB0414 Mental

- Health Care Fund for Children and Youth)
- **Environmental Justice (HB0128 RENEW Act)**

For each bill, members prepared synopses, recorded sponsor and committee details, reviewed fiscal notes, and recommended Council positions. Council members voted on positions during general meetings, determining which bills warranted testimony or further advocacy.

Legislative Outreach and Engagement: MYAC strengthens youth representation by maintaining active communication with legislators, building relationships, and advocating for priority bills. Through scheduled meetings, testimony, and informational materials, the Council ensures that the perspectives of young Marylanders are part of the legislative conversation.

The Council maintained ongoing legislator meetings to advance MYAC's legislative agenda and encourage bill support. The Legislative Committee partnered with the **Public Awareness Committee** to:

- Create youth-friendly **social media graphics** summarizing key bills.
- Develop **email templates** to mobilize youth action on priority legislation.
- Encourage participation in **Advocacy Day**, to engage lawmakers and interest groups in direct conversations about youth-impacting legislation.

Session Outcomes: At the close of each session, MYAC compiles and presents a detailed record of the bills tracked, positions taken, and advocacy efforts made. These outcomes were shared with the Governor's Office for Children and other stakeholders, showcasing the Council's role in advancing youth priorities and setting the stage for the next legislative cycle.

- **Supported 80% of tracked bills**, aligning with Council priorities.
 - **Notable Success:** MYAC supports the passage of **HB 1524** – adding a voting student member in 11th or 12th grade to the Wicomico County Board of Education.
- Delivered an **End-of-Session Legislative Summary** to the Governor's Office for Children at the **End-of-Year Roundtable**, detailing:
 - Bills tracked and supported
 - Testimony provided; and
 - Youth engagement activities
- Continued legislative relationship-building via planned **youth town halls** and targeted outreach for the 2026 session.

2024-2025 MYAC Bill Tracker: The 2024-2025 Bill Tracker lists the priority legislation monitored by MYAC throughout the legislative session. Council members voted on formal positions for each tracked bill, with stances ranging from favorable to unfavorable based on alignment with youth priorities. The tracker details both the Council's official position and the final legislative outcome for each bill, providing a comprehensive record of MYAC's advocacy efforts.

2025 Legislative Session Bill Tracker and Outcome				
Bill Number	Bill Name	Council's Stance	Testimony /Stance Provided	2025 Outcome
<u>SB8</u>	Maryland Civic Excellence Program	Favorable	Written	Passed in Senate
<u>SB29</u>	Education - Phone-Free Schools Pilot Program - Establishment	Unfavorable	Written	Stalled in Committee
<u>SB68</u>	Restorative Practices Schools - Comprehensive Plan	Favorable	Written	Passed
<u>SB82</u>	College Preparatory. Programs. And College Admissions Applications - Fees - Prohibition	Favorable	Written	Stalled in Committee
<u>SB98</u>	Baltimore County, Frederick County, Howard County, and Washington County Boards of Education – Student Members – Alterations	Favorable	Written	Withdrawn by Sponsor
<u>SB95</u>	State And Local Parks-Playgrounds Safety Standards (Our Kids Play Safe Playground Safety Act of 2025)	Favorable	Written	Stalled in Committee
<u>SB274</u>	Criminal Procedure - Child Victims - Testimony in Child Abuse Cases	Favorable	Written	Passed
<u>HB5</u>	Criminal Law - Child Pornography - Artificial Intelligence Software	Favorable	Written	Passed in House
<u>HB53</u>	Task Force on Education Funding and Student Population Growth	Favorable	Written	Stalled in Committee
<u>HB128</u>	Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation - Total Assessed Cost of Greenhouse Gas Emissions - Study and Reports	Favorable	Written	Passed
<u>HB161</u>	County Boards of Education - Curriculum Guides and Courses of Study - Discrepancies	Favorable	Written	Passed
<u>HB277</u>	Environment Water Bottle Filling Stations Requirement	Favorable	Written	Passed
<u>HB282</u>	Public Schools - Sexually Explicit Materials - Prohibited in Libraries and Media Centers	Unfavorable	Written	Stalled in Committee
<u>HB293</u>	Child Victim Testimony in Child Abuse Cases	Favorable	Written	Passed
<u>HB421</u>	Public Safety - 9-1-1 Trust Fund - 9-8-8 Suicide Prevention Hotline	Favorable	Written	Passed
<u>HB504</u>	Excellence in Maryland Public Schools Act	Unfavorable	Written	Passed

2025 Legislative Session Bill Tracker and Outcome				
Bill Number	Bill Name	Council's Stance	Testimony /Stance Provided	2025 Outcome
HB853	Postconviction Review - Procedure to Reduce Duration of Sentence (Maryland Second Look Act)	Favorable	Written	Passed
HB1132	Public Schools - Student Fights - School Investigation and Discipline	Favorable	Written	Stalled in Committee
HB1346	Criminal Procedure - Evidence - Protecting the Admissibility of Creative Expression (PACE Act)	Favorable	Written	Stalled in Committee
HB1524	Wicomico County Board of Education - Election of Members, Student Member, and Compensation	Favorable	Written	Passed

Beyond Bill Tracking - 2025 Forward: To enhance their advocacy pre, during and post the legislative sessions, The Public Awareness committee has embarked on a long-term strategic plan to grow visibility, encourage community engagement and make available more training for young people.

- **Enhance Testimony Methods:** MYAC plans to utilize video testimony (posted on socials) and community engagement tools during future legislative sessions to heighten awareness and bolster statewide involvement.
- **Coordinate Advocacy:** The Council is dedicated to working more closely with the Governor's Office for Children to align bill tracking and advocacy efforts.
- **Direct Legislative Engagement:** MYAC plans to continue co-leading Youth Advocacy Days and trainings in Annapolis for in-person meetings between legislators and Council members.
- **Community Transparency:** The Council seeks to publish the bill tracker to the community during the legislative season to increase transparency and youth engagement.

Public Awareness Committee

Under the leadership of *Public Awareness Committee Chair Rishi Sheth, Co-Chairs Taryn Clemons and Qamryn Askew* made significant progress in increasing visibility and engagement across the state through digital outreach, event promotion, and strategic communications. Below is a summary



of the committee's work throughout the year:

Digital Engagement & Council Visibility:

- Used **Instagram and Facebook** to provide regular updates on Council business, showcase member involvement, and promote Council-led initiatives statewide.
- Created a **dedicated group messaging channel** to ensure swift internal communication and collaboration among committee members.
- Posted **highlights of council members' testimonies** during the **2025 Legislative Session** to increase awareness of youth-centered legislation.
- Shared council member experiences at events such as **Advocacy Day** and the **Community Conversation** to amplify the Council's work and encourage peer engagement.
- Produced and distributed **promotional content** for the **2025–2026 MYAC Application** cycle.

Event Promotion & Outreach: While maintaining the Council's annual programs—this year, members sought out ways to **bolster outreach and events through the Public Awareness Committee**. With much success found through the social media channels, members leveraged key times to share and announce their programs and updates.

- Leveraged social media, email campaigns, and flyers to promote:
 - Annual Community Conversation
 - Youth Advocacy Day
 - Statewide Town Halls
 - MYAC Grant Opportunity
- Introduced a free raffle at the Annual Community Conversation, advertised through digital channels, which contributed to significantly increased youth attendance.



Website Development – A Centralized Hub for Youth: This year MYAC worked to ensure a dedicated online space was generated for young people and families and gather insights about their work and upcoming events. By **March of 2025 – the Public Awareness Committee alongside MYAC's advisor to build a [new website](#)** connected to the GOC office.

- The site, built in partnership with the Council Advisor, aims to serve as a centralized resource for:
 - Information about the Council and its members,
 - Event announcements and recaps,
 - Application details and deadlines,
 - Youth advocacy tools and resources.

Looking Ahead – New Initiatives in Progress: As the Council prepares for the 2025–2026 term, the Public Awareness Committee will be developing several forward-looking initiatives to continue expanding youth engagement, including:

- **MYAC Newsletter:** A recurring publication to highlight Council work, spotlight youth leaders, and share civic opportunities for young Marylanders.
- **Social Media Partnerships:** Plans to collaborate with other youth organizations and creators to amplify Council content and reach new audiences.
- **Small-Dollar Advertising Campaigns:** Strategic use of targeted digital advertising to reach underserved or disconnected communities, in alignment with the Council's commitment to equity and access.
- **Verified Email Communications:** Installing email systems closely linked with the GOC.
- **Refine MYAC's Logo:** To align with the Moore-Miller Administration, MYAC members are confident a design change of their current logo will occur in the 2025-2026 Council term.

Youth Grants Opportunities (YGO) Committee

For the 2024–2025 year, MYAC launched its annual **Youth Grant Opportunity (YGO) with \$5,000 in funding from the Children's Cabinet Interagency Fund (CCIF)**. This annual special project was led by *MYAC Secretary, Folashade Epebinu*. As in prior years, these small grants were designed to support youth-led, Maryland-based projects addressing one or more of the Council's legislative priority areas, with a focused commitment to reach communities with high concentrations of childhood poverty.

The application opened on February 3, 2025, with two public engagement events attended by representatives from over 30 organizations statewide. Applicants were required to submit a detailed proposal, including the project's scope, expected impact, budget, and an adult advisor. MYAC emphasized that portions of grant funding could be **prioritized for projects in ENOUGH-eligible census tracts**—areas with high rates of children living in poverty.

The application portal closed with **15 proposals received from across the state**. Four (4) applications came from counties with no current MYAC representation (Charles, Kent, Somerset, and Talbot). **Over half of the proposals targeted communities where 20% or more of children live in poverty**. Project themes included democracy and civic engagement, literacy, mental health, environmental justice, and educational services.



Following an internal review process, the **YGO Committee selected nine finalists to present to the full Council** in March 2025. Presentations included program mission, community impact, implementation plans, and budget details.

In March 2025, MYAC awarded \$1,000 each to the following five projects:

- **Baltimore Votes** (Baltimore City) – Engaging over 100 young people, through a Student Ambassador program to increase Get Out to Vote numbers in local elections across Baltimore. The program embeds civics curriculum with action-based objectives to meet these outcomes.
- **Beyond Your Mental** (Kent County) – Supporting 8th-to-9th grade transitions through peer-led mental health education, resource fairs, and positive coping strategies.
- **Compostology** (Montgomery County) – Launching food waste recovery, composting programs, and leadership training in Title I schools to advance environmental justice.
- **Mount Hebron High School Period Club** (Howard County) – Advocating for menstrual equity, providing free products in government buildings, shelters, and all-girls schools.
- **The RAY Foundation** (Frederick County) – Providing personalized learning kits, assistive technology, sensory kits, and community events for children in foster care with intellectual disabilities, fostering inclusive educational and social experiences.

The Council will continue to advocate for sustained Children's Cabinet funding for the YGO program in future fiscal years.

Looking to the future, the Council will seek to **expand representation of youth grantees in the Eastern and Western counties** of Maryland, along with reaching more ENOUGH communities, through **multi-year funding to increase positive impacts** for Maryland youth. The Council hopes to grow the youth grants funding with external partners to award more youth-led organizations in the future.

Other Committees, Programs and Partnerships

Annual Community Conversation



Each year, the **Community Conversation** provides a forum for young people to speak candidly about the challenges and opportunities they experience in their daily lives. The insights gathered during these conversations serve as the foundation for MYAC's legislative platform and advocacy priorities.

In November 2024, MYAC hosted a hybrid event—combining in-person and virtual small group sessions—that engaged more than **50 youth** from across Maryland. Over the course of four breakout groups, participants discussed issues ranging from mental health and violence prevention to educational equity and the impact of policy decisions on personal well-being.

The event culminated in the selection of **four legislative priorities** that will guide MYAC's advocacy efforts in the upcoming year:

1. Education and Resource Equity
2. Mental Health Services and Support
3. Safe School and Community Spaces
4. Social Justice

The 2024 Community Conversation also marked a year of strong partnership engagement, with organizations such as the **NAACP** and **Regional Student Government Associations** joining the conversation.

Opportunities for Growth in 2025:

- Broaden outreach to underrepresented youth in Western Maryland and the Eastern Shore.
- Strengthen follow-up with attendees to keep them engaged in MYAC initiatives.
- Showcase the impact of youth grant recipients to demonstrate the connection between advocacy and tangible community change.



University of Maryland Partners with Maryland Youth Advisory Council

This year, MYAC [launched a new partnership](#), led by *Graham Snyder* with the **University of Maryland's Center for Democracy & Civic Engagement (CDCE)** to create "Annapolis 101," a comprehensive legislative training program for young people. The university has committed to developing co-branded materials from their research-based curriculum and MYAC's grassroots training guides aimed at empowering young people to know how to influence, engage and advocate through the Maryland General Assembly.

First Stage Program Goals 2025-2026:

- Combine MYAC's and UMD's legislative education materials into a single, cohesive training resource.
- Grow youth knowledge of how to engage with, track, and influence legislation.
- Provide accessible advocacy resources for youth organizations and learners statewide.

Future Plans: MYAC will be working with the University to track data, refine materials and solidify the growth and continuation of the partnership. A short timeline of events is provided below:

2025 - Legislative Season: MYAC anticipates releasing the digital form of the new Legislative Training Materials—these materials will be posted to the Council’s webpage and shared with key partners such as appointing bodies, Local Management Boards and other youth councils across the state.

Summer 2026 - Youth Engagement Tours: utilizing townhalls as the main tool for engagement, MYAC members will embed the new Legislative Training Materials into their town hall framework, providing optional sessions for community and youth. In addition, MYAC will launch a “Sign Up For Training” section to the webpage for youth groups to request development.

2026 & Beyond - Based on data shared and analyzed along with the University of Maryland, MYAC anticipates codifying their work with the Center for Democracy & Civic Engagement to share current data with the community, alter development materials and enhance the youth-training experience.

2025 Unlock Hope Youth Advocacy Day



On February 17, 2025, MYAC members joined hundreds of youth and youth-serving organizations at the **Annual Unlock Hope Youth Advocacy Day** in Annapolis, hosted in partnership with the Maryland Out-of-School Time (MOST) Network. This flagship event brought together more than **500 young people** from across the state to meet with lawmakers, learn about the legislative process, and advocate for issues directly affecting Maryland’s youth.

MYAC distributed its **ENOUGH Initiative one-pager**, a resource summarizing the initiative’s goals to end child poverty and expand economic mobility. Helping connect MYAC’s legislative priorities to tangible statewide initiatives and demonstrated the Council’s commitment to bridging advocacy and action.

MYAC members met with several key legislators, including:

- Delegate Kris Fair (*District: 3, Frederick County*)
- Delegate Michele Guyton (*District 42B, Baltimore County*)
- Delegate Jared Solomon (*District 18, Montgomery County*)
- Senator Cory McCray (*District 45, Baltimore City*)

In these meetings, members shared the Council’s **2025 legislative priorities**, discussed the **ENOUGH Initiative** in detail, and explored ways to engage legislators in youth-centered policy conversations throughout the year. Lawmakers expressed interest in strengthening ties

with MYAC by inviting ongoing communication and updates on youth-led projects.

Advocacy Day continues to be one of the Council's most impactful outreach opportunities—empowering youth to speak directly to decision-makers, build confidence in their advocacy skills, and foster lasting partnerships between young leaders and state government.

Youth Town Halls

MYAC continues to use youth town halls as a critical tool for engaging directly with young people, families, community stakeholders, and public officials. These gatherings create space for candid conversations about local needs, allowing MYAC to listen, learn, and carry community perspectives into its advocacy and legislative work. Each town hall is designed to reflect the priorities of the host community while connecting participants with resources and opportunities.



A highlight of the 2024–2025 term was the **Frederick County Youth Town Hall**, held on Friday, September 20, 2024. MYAC co-hosted the event alongside **Delegate Kris Fair** and the **Frederick Youth Council**. The town hall brought together youth, parents, and community members from across Frederick County for an evening of open dialogue on pressing local issues.

Participants explored topics such as:

- **Access to Services** – including mental health resources, transportation, and after-school programs.
- **Youth Employment Opportunities** – with discussion on barriers to hiring, workforce readiness, and expanding local job pathways for teens.
- **Neighborhood Safety** – addressing concerns about safe spaces, community-police relationships, and youth-driven safety initiatives.



Feedback from this town hall was incorporated into MYAC's ongoing advocacy agenda, ensuring Frederick County's youth voice is represented in statewide discussions.

In addition to Frederick, MYAC is actively working to expand its town hall footprint through upcoming partnerships with **Montgomery County**, **Anne Arundel County**, **Baltimore City**, and **Prince George's County**. Council members have a vested interest in increasing engagement in Eastern Shores counties. Key partners such as **Mid-Shore Mediation Center**, **The Caroline County Local Management Board**, and **Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake** are invested partners the Council will work with in expanding their townhall events. By tailoring each town hall to regional needs, MYAC continues to build a holistic understanding of the diverse challenges and opportunities facing Maryland's youth.

Governor Wes Moore ENOUGH Announcement:

Members of the Council had the opportunity to attend the **Governor's ENOUGH Act event at Bucklodge Middle School**, where Governor Moore announced the [inaugural ENOUGH Grant awardees](#). Council members engaged directly with youth, families, and community leaders, and also met the *Special Secretary of the Governor's Office for Children, Carmel Martin*.



At this inaugural ENOUGH Act event, **MYAC youth members leveraged their personal yet meaningful connections with partnership and planning grantees, such as C.H.E.E.R. – Community Health and Empowerment through Education and Research** to support joint planning of town halls and civic conversations that bring youth perspectives into community planning. Inspired by the energy and purpose of this partnership, MYAC members expressed renewed enthusiasm for convening new, shared events.



External Partnerships:

MYAC values collaboration with organizations that share its commitment to youth advocacy. Key partnerships this year included:

- **University System of Maryland (USM)** – Exploring new pathways to appoint college students and bring a collegiate perspective to MYAC's work.
- **Maryland Out of School Time (MOST) Network** – Continued partnering for the annual Youth Advocacy Day, and legislation training for over **500 young people**.
- **National Academies of Sciences** – Council members fostering strong relationships with business enterprises in national conversations on private sector investment in youth and serving as facilitators at high-impact forums.



Additional future partners include: *Voices United (Bowie Speaks), Functional Training Zone, Youth Pride Association, Coalition for Juvenile Justice*, and various Maryland county and city youth councils.

What's New With MYAC

While **laser-focused on the needs of young people in their counties, members also strive to enrich the Council experience for upcoming young people**. Each year, council members develop recommendations for the new council members, highlights and quotes to share with today's young people and tomorrow's lawmakers, entrepreneurs and caregivers.

Current Improvements

- **Meeting location:** MYAC shifted all operations to the Annapolis Offices in January of 2025 to connect closer with GOC and the Maryland General Assembly. The Council hopes to use the new location as a central hub for youth activities in the near future.
- **LMB and MYAC Collaboration:** MYAC witnessed tremendous support from the Local Management Boards (LMBs) in distributing information, attending information sessions and uplifting MYAC events. The Council seeks to expand this partnership for more townhalls and investment plans to youth groups across the state.
- **Onboarding new members:** Understanding the anxiety joining the Council can bring to new members, the Council has begun a Meet and Greet pre-session for all new members prior to the first Council meeting.

Long Term Goals

- **Improve Transportation:** The Council's goal to expand representation can only be done with improved transportation options for members. The Council is exploring alternative options including, setting-up satellite locations across the state; chartering a MYAC bus; or finding dedicated funding opportunities for ride-share. MYAC is dedicated to strategizing on the best vehicle to get more young people to and from Annapolis for events, fun and advocacy.
- **Standardize On-boarding Trainings:** Previously on-boarding has varied based on Council leadership, therefore, MYAC members want to develop a *Program Guide—Serving Maryland Youth* to give all future members a referable document for all MYAC-related activities, partnerships and internal systems.
- **Increase Economic Investments:** The YGO Committee is one of the Council's most critical initiatives to aid young people to increase economic stability and carry out projects for youth and families in Maryland. MYAC has strong interest in 1) Expanding the Youth Grants fund by increasing the amount of funding available and awarding more projects inENOUGH communities, and 2) Launching grant application process prior to the annual Community Conversations event.

Memories, Words of Wisdom and Acknowledgment

“Being a member of MYAC has allowed me to engage with legislation and represent my peers in ways I never imagined. This is a powerful and dedicated group of young people and I’m amazed by everyone on the council constantly.” - Qamryn Askew

“I am so grateful to have experienced being on MYAC this year. I look forward to spending the rest of my term continuing to learn, grow, and have fun with my fellow council members. I wouldn’t trade my time on MYAC for anything, and I am beyond excited for what next year holds.” - Joyce Yun

“Being part of MYAC has given me the chance to represent youth across Maryland and build new skills. One of my favorite moments was attending the Enough Act event at Bucklodge Middle School, where even a small group of us had the opportunity to speak for young people. I also loved helping lead the community conversation, bringing youth and families together to share their voices on the challenges we face and how to solve them. As a youth representative of ENOUGH grantee CHEER, I am looking forward to building youth-focused town halls with the organization to learn more from young people.” - David Renderos

“Serving as a MYAC member this past year has been such an insightful and rewarding experience. Without this community of amazing youth leaders from throughout the state, which grew to become a second family, I would have never had such impactful opportunities to exercise my voice and grow my civic engagement. I’m greatly looking forward to my second year part of the council and cannot wait to see all that we accomplish!” - Lorena Wu

“I could not be more grateful for the experience of my first year on MYAC. The community and support that it brings you to are unparalleled—being a council member will open doors for you that you could never imagine. MYAC provides the structure to do good, but anyone can, and should, do good for themselves and their community.” - Graham Snyder

“MYAC is not only a powerhouse of representation for youth voices across the state of Maryland, but also a close knit family. The connections made both within and outside of the Council ran deep, as did the experiences and learning opportunities. Each term ushers in a new generation of likeminded, brilliant members who are able to find solace in each other and carry on a legacy of selflessness and progression.” - Alexander Hossainkhail

