WES MOORE
Governor

ARUNA MILLER
Lieutenant Governor

Maryland
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF CRIME PREVENTION, YOUTH, AND VICTIM SERVICES

August 2, 2023

The Honorable Wes Moore
Governor of Maryland
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable William C. "Bill" Ferguson IV
President of the Senate
State House, H-107
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

The Honorable Adrienne Jones
Speaker of the House of Delegates
State House, H-101
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Report required by State Government Article § 9-2701(m) (MSAR #10854) - Maryland Youth Advisory Council 2022-2023 Annual Report

Dear Governor Moore, President Ferguson, and Speaker Jones:

As required by § 9-2701(m) of the State Government Article, please find an enclosed copy of the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services' report on behalf of the Maryland Youth Advisory Council titled, *Maryland Youth Advisory Council 2022-2023 Annual Report*. This report has been developed by the members of the Council and reports on the activities, events, and priorities of the Council during the 2022-2023 year.

Should you have any questions relating to the information provided in this report, please feel free to contact me at 410-697-9338.

Sincerely,

Dorothy J. Lennig, Esq.
Executive Director

cc: Sarah Albert, Department of Legislative Services (5 copies)

Maryland Youth Advisory Council 2022-2023 Annual Report

August 31, 2023

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

Contact: Christina Drushel-Williams
christina.drushel@maryland.gov

MSAR # 10854

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Letter From The Chair

Dear Maryland Youth Advisory Council Members,

As we come to the end of another year, I wanted to take a moment to reflect on all that we have accomplished together. This year was our first fully in-person year since the coronavirus pandemic, and we successfully overcame many challenges as a Council. None of our Council members had experience with in-person advocacy, we had few connections within the Maryland General Assembly, and we had lost connection with youth perspectives across the State.

Yet, this Council year, we have been able to overcome these obstacles. We built connections with lawmakers, hosted a press conference on the steps of the State House Building, attended local and national conferences, and organized the Council's first ever grant program.

I am so proud of all that we have accomplished this year. We have made a significant impact on the issues that matter to young people in Maryland and laid the groundwork for future Council years. I am confident that the Maryland Youth Advisory Council will continue to be a force for youth representation in the years to come. Thank you for all of your hard work and dedication.

Sincerely,

Samuel Desai, 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 2022-2023 term, members participated in various activities to voice their opinions and affect change:

- Held nine meetings, exceeding the required four meetings;
- Adopted three connected legislative priorities: student and school safety, educational reform, and social justice;
- Served as panelists at the Maryland United 4 Youth Conference, National Mentoring Summit, School Safety Policy Forum, and Youth Risk Behavior Survey for Youth Development Professionals Webinar;
- Hosted a virtual Community Conversation for youth across the State;
- Tracked and supported bills of interest, and provided written and oral testimony during the 2023 legislative session;
- Hosted a press conference with Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary, Delegate Joe Vogel, Delegate Kris Fair, and other community stakeholders in support of House Bill 119;
- Dispersed $5,000 in grant funds to five youth-led organizations; and
- Hosted two youth town halls with Senator Michael Jackson in Calvert County and members of the Montgomery County Delegation.

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 (Office).

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 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

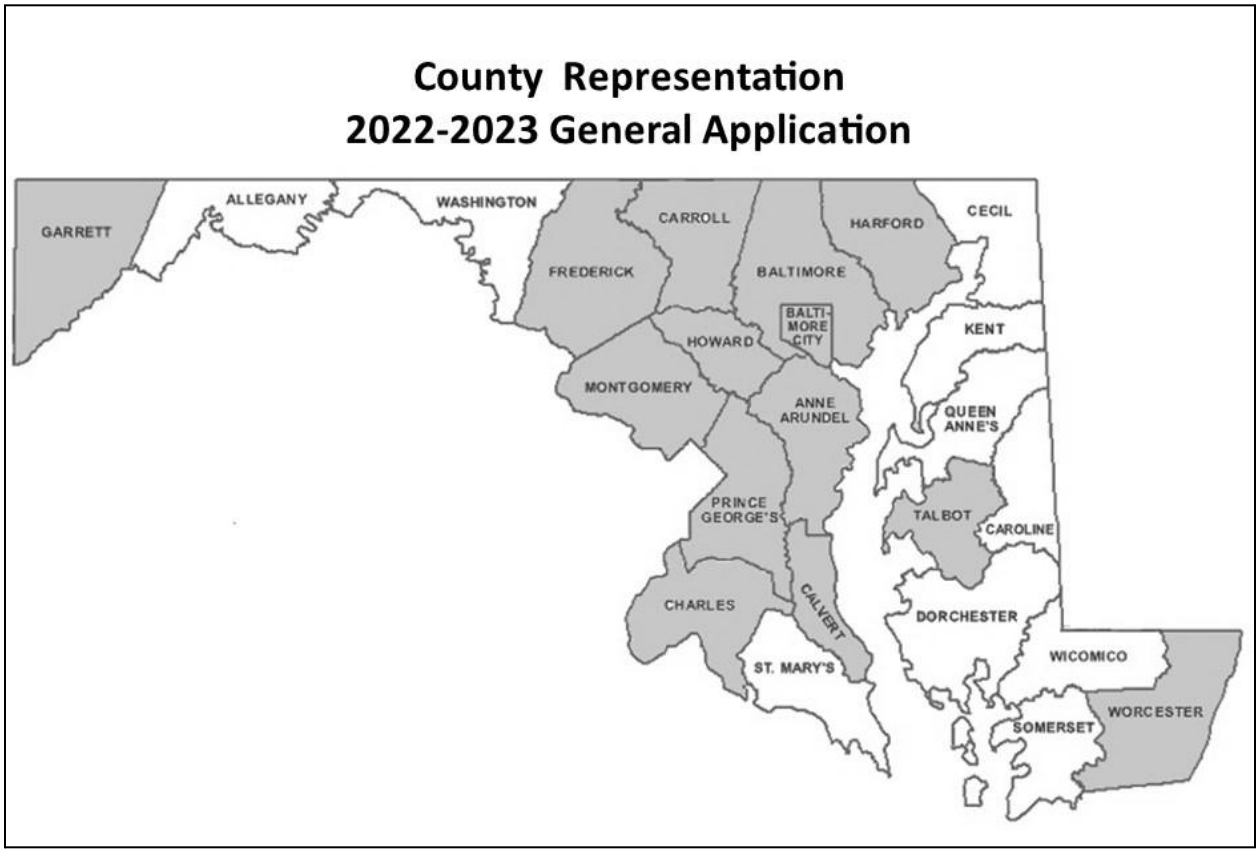
- Inform the Governor and the General Assembly of issues concerning youth, including offering testimony on these issues before legislative bodies;
- Examine issues of importance to youth, including education, a safe learning environment, employment opportunities, strategies to increase youth participation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

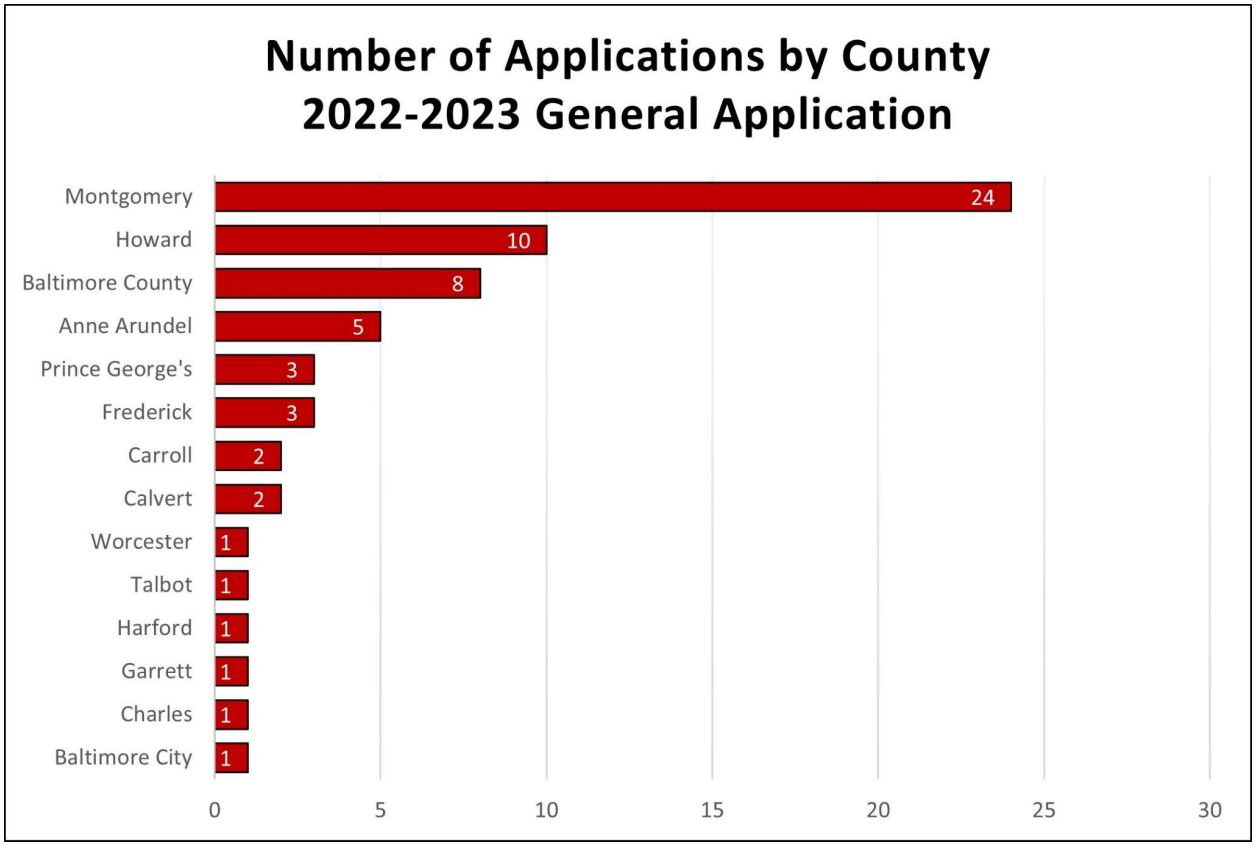
- Advise local officials and community leaders on youth issues;
- Collect information from other youth groups in order to inform the activities of the Council; and
- Report its activities to the Governor and General Assembly before the last day of the Council year.

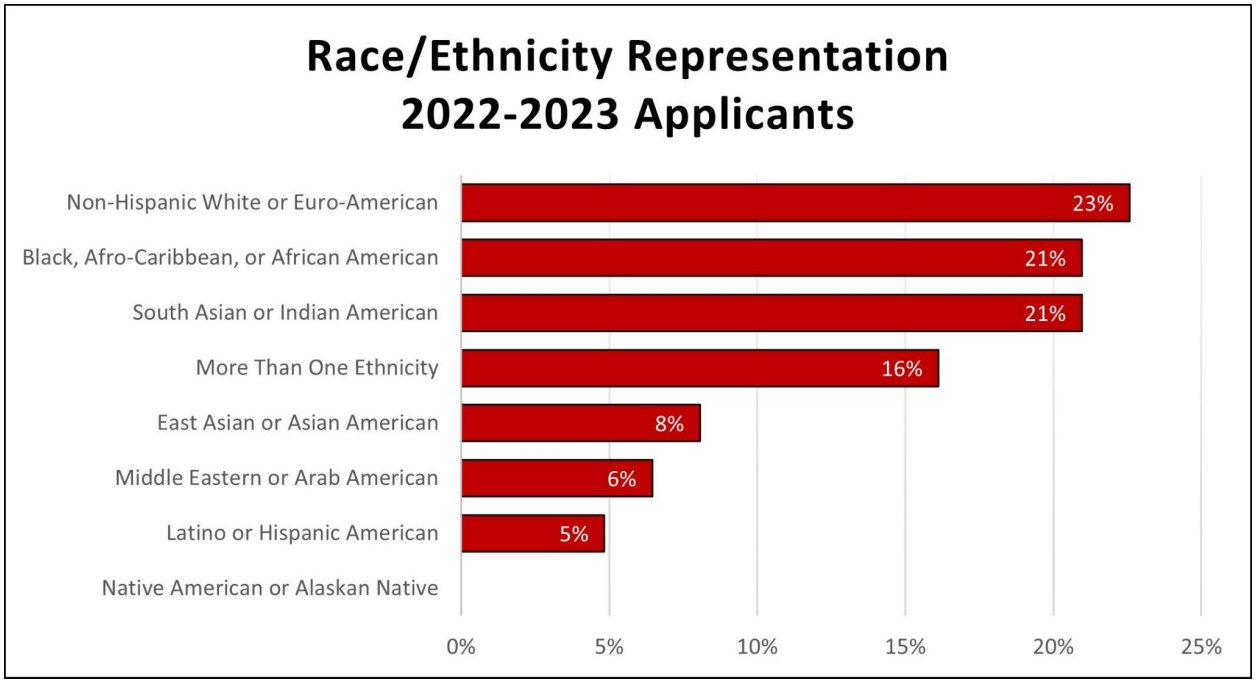
2022-2023 Applications at a Glance

For the 2022-2023 term, applications were available online on the Council's website from March 1, 2022 through June 30, 2022. Sixty-two applications were received from youth residing in 14 counties, representing 39 high schools, colleges, and universities. Of these applicants, 60% identified as female, 29% identified as male, 2% identified as nonbinary, and 9% did not disclose their gender identity. The majority of applicants were from Montgomery County, representing 39% of the total applications. In addition, 77% of the applicants identified as non-white of which 42% identified as "Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American" (21%) or "South Asian or Indian American" (21%).

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

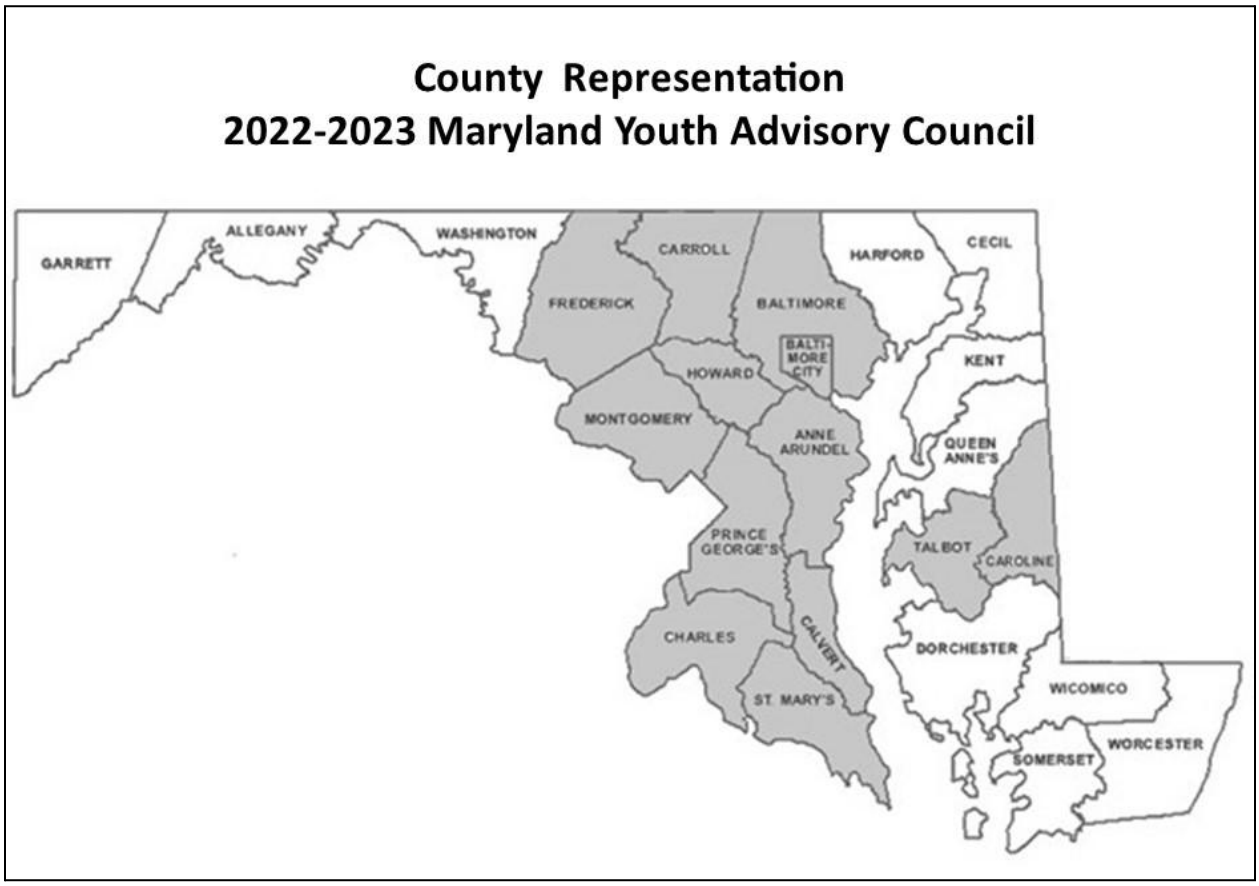


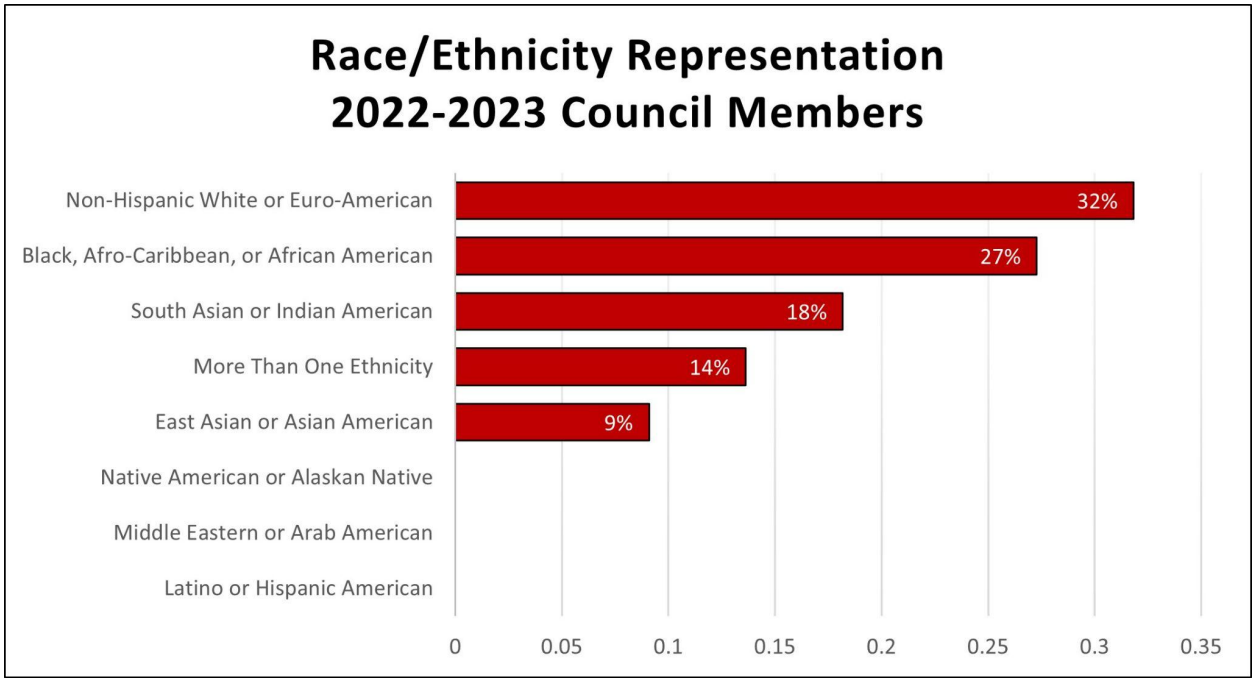

Number of Applications by County
2022-2023 General Application
Montgomery
Howard
Baltimore County
Anne Arundel
Prince George's
Frederick
Carroll
Calvert
Worcester
Talbot
Harford
Garrett
Charles
Baltimore City
24
10
8
5
3
3
2
2
1
1
1
1
1
1
0
5
10
15
20
25
30


Race/Ethnicity Representation
2022-2023 Applicants
Non-Hispanic White or Euro-American
Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American
South Asian or Indian American
More Than One Ethnicity
East Asian or Asian American
Middle Eastern or Arab American
Latino or Hispanic American
Native American or Alaskan Native
23%
21%
21%
16%
8%
6%
5%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%

2022-2023 Council at a Glance

The 2022-2023 Council is composed of 22 members, representing 13 counties, 15 high schools, and five colleges/universities. The Council includes 13 (59%) members who identify as female and nine (41%) members who identify as male. Of the 22 members, 11 are returning second-year members and 11 are first-year members. In addition, 68% of Council members identify as non-white with Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American representing 27% of the Council.





2022-2023 Maryland Youth Advisory Council Roster

2022-2023 MARYLAND YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL EXECUTIVE BOARD (elected by Council members)

Chair: Samuel Desai
Vice Chair: Emily Shrieves
Secretary: Henry Meiser
Legislative Committee Chair: Grace Minakowski
Public Awareness Committee Chair: Shelbi Briggs
Executive Board Members: Nicholas Carter, Dhruv Girish, Derek Mu, Yashita Thalla, Eman Zia
Historian: Chimee Ejiogu
Technology Officer: Nancy Lin
Parliamentarian: William O'Donnell

APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR

Appointed in 2021
Samuel Desai: Montgomery County - Richard Montgomery High School
Dhruv Girish: Frederick County - Urbana High School

Appointed in 2022
Chimee Ejiogu: Howard County - Glenelg Country School
William O'Donnell: Talbot County - Easton High School

APPOINTED BY THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Appointed in 2021
Hailey Smith: Prince George's County - Bowie High School

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 BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

Appointed in 2021
Shelbi Briggs: Caroline County - Colonel Richardson High School
Meghna Chandrasekaran: Baltimore County - University of Maryland, Baltimore County
Derek Mu: Montgomery County - Montgomery Blair High School

Appointed in 2022
Nancy Lin: St. Mary's County - Great Mills High School

NOMINATED BY THE MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT COUNCILS

Appointed in 2021
Maja Durkovic: Baltimore County - Eastern Technical High School
Henry Meiser: Calvert County - St. Mary's Ryken High School

Appointed in 2022
Grace Minakowski: Calvert County - Huntingtown High School
Eman Zia: Anne Arundel County - South River High School

NOMINATED BY THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND STUDENT COUNCIL

Appointed in 2021
No appointments were made

Appointed in 2022
No appointments were made

NOMINATED BY THE MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION—STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

Appointed in 2021
No appointments were made

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 2021
Sumiya Rahaman: Carroll County - Westminster High School
Emily Shrieves: Calvert County - St. Mary's College of Maryland
Yashita Thalla: Frederick County - Urbana High School

Appointed in 2022
Tehle Ross: Baltimore City County - Baltimore City College

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 2022-2023 term, the Council held hybrid meetings once a month from September to May. Meetings were held on Saturday afternoons. All meeting dates and times are available on the Council's website at https://goccp.maryland.gov/myac/.

MEETING #1: SEPTEMBER 17, 2022

Council members started the 2022-2023 session by welcoming the first-year members and a warm welcome back to second-year members. After introductions, the Council members reviewed the responsibilities of the Council and Maryland's legislative structure. Council members then held elections to select the officers for the year.

MEETING #2: OCTOBER 8, 2022

The Council participated in activities to prepare for the Community Conversation. First, members participated in a Council-only community conversation to identify areas that appointed members are interested in advocating for in the 2023 General Assembly. After that, the Council discussed the logistics for the event and agreed that the conversation would be hybrid and statewide. Committee breakouts were held to create committee-specific communication methods and meetings.

MEETING #3: NOVEMBER 12, 2022

The initial date of the Community Conversation was postponed to the December meeting due to low registration numbers. The Council conducted regular business including presentations on parliamentary procedure, the Maryland General Assembly, and legislative session. The Council also established GroupMe as the preferred communication platform for Council members in addition to email. Finally, the Council discussed planning for the small grant project.

MEETING #4: DECEMBER 17, 2022

The Council hosted its annual Community Conversation in a hybrid format. The virtual and in-person spaces collaborated during this discussion to help inform the Council of issues facing Marylanders, and specifically young people.

MEETING #5: JANUARY 14, 2023

The Legislative Committee provided a comprehensive update on the Council's 2023 legislative platform and priorities. In addition, the Council's bylaws were reviewed and amendments considered. The Council approved the amendment to increase the required meeting participation of members from 50% to 66%.

MEETING #6: FEBRUARY 4, 2023

The Council met and discussed administrative items. These items included planning of the Council's legislative advocacy day, and the 2023-2024 application, questions, and materials.

MEETING #7: MARCH 11, 2023

The Council reviewed the 2023 small grant applications, a new initiative to support the creation of projects to impact Maryland youth and young adults. Each applicant was invited to present to the Council on what they would use grant funds for during an executive session. Additionally, the Council managed a few administrative items related to its legislative advocacy day.

MEETING #8: APRIL 15, 2023

The Council participated in the debrief of the 2023 legislative advocacy day and the Council's press conference on House Bill 119. Members also discussed the 2023-2024 application, and a legislative update from the end of the 2023 General Assembly session.

MEETING #9: MAY 13, 2023

The Council convened for its final meeting of the year. During the meeting, members discussed upcoming informational sessions for prospective applicants. The Council was guided through a reflection activity to share what went well, what did not, and what can be improved for next year. At the end of the meeting, the Council hosted a celebration for outgoing members and recognized the work of the Council during the 2022-2023 year.

Committees

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

Under the leadership of Legislative Committee Chair, Grace Minakowski, the Committee began the year by creating organizational structures for assigning tasks including a centralized member “to-do” spreadsheet and a bill tracking spreadsheet. The Committee also formed a group chat for easy communication and held update calls throughout the year. The Chair created update videos for members unable to attend virtual meetings, ensuring the Committee operated efficiently.

Prior to the 2023 legislative session, a presentation on the Maryland General Assembly (courtesy of the Maryland Association of Student Councils) was presented to the Council. The presentation helped members understand the State’s policy-making process and structure of the Maryland General Assembly. Using input from the Community Conversation, the Committee authored the legislative priorities under the 2023 platform and assigned members specific articles of the platform to focus on whilst tracking bills. Lastly, the Council sent an introductory email detailing its mission and hope for collaboration to every legislator in the Maryland legislature.

During the 2023 legislative session, from January to April, the Committee members updated the bill tracking spreadsheet daily, utilizing the email notification feature of the “My MGA'' Tracking Website. Members researched legislation to create a synopsis and recorded the sponsors, action, Council vote, and other items on its tracking sheet. During monthly meetings, the Council voted on bill stances and used said stances to give written/virtual testimony. The Committee also scheduled various meetings with legislators (virtual and in-person) to advance the Council’s legislative agenda and urge support of favorable bills.

The Legislative Committee collaborated with the Public Awareness Committee to create social media graphics on bills and send emails to inform students/youth stakeholders on legislation deemed relevant. For National Eating Disorder Awareness Week, the Committee created an awareness video on House Bill 634 (Banning Diet Pills for Minors) for social media accounts and an email template for teens to send to their representatives urging support of the bill’s passage.

As the session came to a close, the Committee created a presentation on the bills the Council supported/tracked in 2023. Council members will present this information to youth organizations across the State in order to create awareness for passed legislation and garner support for bills that are reintroduced in 2024. The Legislative Committee also plans to hold youth town halls over the summer, with the help of Senator Jackson’s office in Calvert County and Delegate Vogel’s office in Montgomery County, to connect teens to their representatives. The Council plans to host county/regional town halls throughout the summer and fall.

PUBLIC AWARENESS COMMITTEE

The Public Awareness Committee in collaboration with the Legislative Committee successfully promoted the Council and reached youth from across the state of Maryland.

2023 Legislative Session

LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

During the 2014-2015 session, the Legislative Committee spearheaded the development of a legislative platform as a way to solidify 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.

2023 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Student and School Safety

A. Improve Student-SRO (Student Resource Officer) Relations
    - SRO Alternatives and Reformed Training
    - Accountability and Enforcement of Safe to Learn Act (2018)
    - School-To-Prison Pipeline
B. Reducing School Shootings and Violence

Educational Reform

A. Increased Free/Accessible Mental Health Resources in Schools
B. Health Curriculum Reformations
    - Consent-Based Sex Education
    - Sex and Human Trafficking Awareness
    - Initiatives Combating Tobacco, Marijuana, and Vaping
C. Promote Inclusivity in School Curriculum

Social Justice

A. Environmental Justice
    - Support for Local and Youth-Led Initiatives
    - Support Systemic Regulations to Mitigate Climate Change
B. Anti-Discrimination
    - Racial/Ethnic/LGBTQ+

- Religious
- Disability

C. Reduce Economic Inequality
- Higher-Education Support
- Healthcare Reform

2023 LEGISLATIVE BILLS

The Council tracked over 45 bills during the 2023 legislative session and made an official stance on 18 bills. The Council provided written testimony for House Bill 49 - Economic Justice and Racial Reconciliation Act, House Bill 119 - Inclusive Health Education, House Bill 402 - Creating the Kent County SMOB, House Bill 634/Senate Bill 602 - Banning Diet Pills for Minors, and Senate Bill 775 - Protecting Private Wetlands. The Council also provided oral testimony for House Bill 347 -Litigating Fossil Fuel Companies for Climate Change.

The Council also met with state legislators to advocate for bills including House Bill 175 - SMOB Voting Rights and Senate Bill 775 - Structural Shoreline Stabilization Measures. The Council worked closely with Delegate Joseph Vogel, Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary, Delegate Kris Fair, Delegate Jared Solomon, and Senator Johnny Mautz. Council members also worked to garner support for legislation of interest and collaborated on ways to bring lawmaker attention to youth needs across the State.

2023 Legislative Session Bill Tracker and Outcome				
Bill Number	**Bill Name**	**Council's Stance**	**Testimony Provided**	**2023 Outcome**
Senate Bill 3/House Bill 271	9-8-8 Trust Fund - Funding	Support	Oral	Passed
Senate Bill 5/House Bill 13	Hate Crimes - Civil Remedy	Support	None	Passed
House Bill 16	Primary and Secondary Education - Title IX - Notice (Hear Our Voices Act)	Support	None	Passed
House Bill 49	Economic Justice and Racial Reconciliation Act	Support	Written	Withdrawn
Senate Bill 84/House Bill 40	Places of Public Accommodation and Public Buildings - Gender Inclusive Signage	Support	None	Stalled in Committee
Senate Bill 93/House Bill 96	Juvenile Court - Jurisdiction	Support	None	Stalled in Committee
Senate Bill 95	Counties - Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks - Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools	Support	Written	Stalled in Committee
House Bill 99/Senate Bill 316	Education - Public High Schools - Financial Literacy Curriculum	Support	None	Stalled in Committee
House Bill 108	Human Services - Universal Basic Income for Transition-Age Youth - Establishment	Support	None	Stalled in Committee
House Bill	County Boards of Education - Curriculum	Support	Written	Passed in the

119/Senate Bill 199	Guides and Courses of Study - Requirements			House
House Bill 175	Baltimore County Board of Education - Student Member - Voting and Training	Support	None	Passed
Senate Bill 263/House Bill 573	Maryland Higher Education Commission - Access to Mental Health Advisory Committee - Establishment	Support	None	Passed
House Bill 347	Attorney General - Climate Change Actions - Authorization	Support	Oral	Stalled in Committee
House Bill 402/Senate Bill 402	Kent County - Board of Education - Student Member	Support	Written	Passed
House Bill 426/Senate Bill 761	Correctional Facilities - Transgender, Nonbinary, and Intersex Inmates (Transgender Respect, Agency, and Dignity Act)	Support	None	Stalled in Committee
House Bill 515	Public Schools - Active Shooter Safety Drills or Trainings - Requirements	Support	None	Passed in the House
House Bill 634/Senate Bill 602	Public Health - Sale of Diet Pills to Minors - Prohibition (Protecting Teenagers From Unregulated Diet Pills)	Support	Written	Stalled in Committee
Senate Bill 775	Private Wetlands - Structural Shoreline Stabilization Measures - Authorization	Support	Written	Stalled in Committee
House Bill 1092	Election Law - Early Voting - Number of Days	Oppose	None	Stalled in Committee
House Bill 1164	Public Schools - Expanded American History - Development of Content Standards and Implementation	Support	None	Stalled in Committee

2023 ADVOCACY DAY & HOUSE BILL 119 PRESS CONFERENCE

On March 30, 2023, the Council held a press conference at Lawyer's Mall in Annapolis in support of House Bill 119. House Bill 119 would require each county public school district to abide by policy and curriculum standards set by the Maryland State Board of Education; require the Superintendent to notify a county board if it is not in compliance; and authorize the Superintendent to withhold funds if compliance is not achieved in a designated period of time. Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary, Delegate Kris Fair, and Delegate Joe Vogel joined the Council in support of this legislation.

Speakers at the event included the following Council members: Samuel Desai, Grace Minakowski,

William O'Donnell, Dhruv Girish, Mahad Binder, and Yashita Thalla. Jaden Farris of Annapolis Pride, Gregory Brightbill of GLSEN MD, and Jason Lewis of the Prince Georges County Democratic Central Committee also provided remarks in support of House Bill 119.

Following the press conference, Delegate Vogel recognized Council members for their advocacy work on the House floor. Council members conducted office visits in the House and Senate buildings to distribute a one-pager on key bills followed by the Council and the 2023-2024 application information. The remainder of the day was used to attend bill hearings in committee.

Other Meetings, Events, and Activities

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Through the initiative of the Public Awareness Committee, the Council hosted a virtual Community Conversation to identify and develop solutions to community problems, engage young people in creating community change, share thoughts and ideas to policymakers, and help young people learn and engage with the Council. The Community Conversation was a very interactive, collaborative, and included student-led debate. The Council gained much insight into the concerns of youth including the ongoing impacts of the pandemic, school safety, mental health, and in equality. This conversation not only informed the policy agenda but also gave members a rewarding experience of directly interacting with its constituency and peers.

MARYLAND UNITED FOR YOUTH CONFERENCE AND PANEL DISCUSSION

Council Chair Samuel Desai and Vice-Chair Emily Shrieves were invited to speak at the Maryland United for Youth Conference. This conference, hosted by the Maryland Out of School Time (MOST) Network and MENTOR Maryland|DC, took place on November 18, 2022.

This panel, titled “Paving the Way,” was about 90 minutes in length and had four panelists, including Chair Desai and Vice-Chair Shrieves. It explored how adults can create meaningful youth leadership opportunities by paving the way (or getting out of the way) to let young people truly *lead*. Chair Desai and Vice-Chair Shrieves shared their experiences pertaining to the Council on how adults can best support youth leadership. The Council is excited to continue to partner with MOST and MENTOR Maryland|DC in the future.

NATIONAL MENTORING SUMMIT AND PANEL DISCUSSION

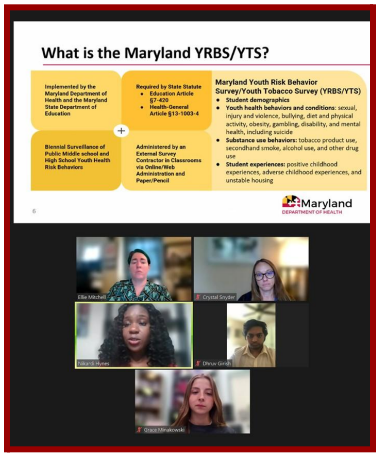
After the Maryland United for Youth Conference, Chair Desai was invited to represent the Council on a panel at the National Mentoring Summit on Thursday, January 26, 2023, in Washington DC. The panel was hosted by MENTOR, a national nonprofit that supported the Maryland United for Youth Conference.

There were over 1,100 attendees from across the county that watched the panel. Chair Desai spoke about the Council's push to incorporate diverse perspectives when discussing youth policy. Other panel members talked about youth activism and community engagement.

SCHOOL SAFETY POLICY FORUM

On April 29, 2023, the Council participated in the Public Policy Forum on School Safety hosted by Nu Zeta Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. The panel, composed of school administration officials and mental health professionals, also included two members of the Council, Henry Meiser and Eric Valentine. The members provided a youth perspective on the questions and issues raised, which included school climate, School Resource Officers (SROs), mental health supports, and preventative measures. Many youth attended the forum, which made this a great opportunity for the Council to connect with a new audience and advertise upcoming applications. Overall, this was a valuable experience for the Council, serving its mission of connecting with youth to influence the actions it takes regarding legislation.

YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY (YRBS) WEBINAR



On May 18, 2023, Council members Dhruv Girish (second-year) and Grace Minakowski (first-year) served as youth panelists for the "Youth Risk Behavior Survey for Youth Development Professionals" webinar. The webinar was hosted by the Maryland Out Of School Time (MOST) Network in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Health.

The webinar began with a presentation from Nikardi Jallah of the Maryland Health Department on the 2021-2022 Youth Risk Behavior Survey trends and results. The presentation highlighted key trends in the 2021-2022 data as compared to previous years, and provided insight into demographic correlations. Key trends included a general increase in

negative mental health indications like suicide, depression, and sadness/hopeless, and a decrease in tobacco, marijuana, and alcohol abuse. The survey also found that women and LGBTQ+ teens were more likely to report risky behavior.

Girish and Minakowski, along with a youth representative from Maryland 4-H, shared their thoughts on the data findings and provided recommendations on potential solutions for adult leaders in attendance. The panel also touched on the stigmatization of mental health and substance abuse as well as how to best address peers in conversation about risky behavior.

TOBACCO-USE PREVENTION AND 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. During the 2022-2023 year, the Council supported the launch of a youth-led tobacco and vape use prevention initiative. 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. This information was used to develop a youth summit to bring together young people from across Maryland to unite and launch this initiative.

The summit was held on Saturday, May 20, 2023, at the University of Maryland, College Park. 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.

As participants laid the groundwork for their movement, the summit 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.

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.

2023-2024 APPLICATION Q&A SESSION

The Council hosted two virtual Q&A sessions on May 25, 2023 and June 3, 2023, for potential applicants in the upcoming year. Overall, these sessions were attended by 21 participants including interested applicants and current members. This was an opportunity for applicants to learn more about the role of the Council and the experiences of current members. Council members presented their responsibilities and the accomplishments of the 2022-2023 year. Council members also answered questions from participants about the Council and its application process. Lastly, the June application session was recorded and posted to the Council's social media accounts for those unable to attend.

YOUTH TOWN HALLS

Building on newly formed relationships with legislators during the 2023 legislative session and looking towards the 2024 legislative session, the Council plans to host youth town halls during the summer and fall of 2023. The Council intends to gather input on youth-focused issues to inform its advocacy efforts and connect teens with their representatives to increase civic engagement. These events will also serve as a recruiting opportunity for the Council. Currently, the Calvert County Town Hall is scheduled for June 22, 2023, in partnership with Senator Michael Jackson and the Montgomery County Town Hall is scheduled for July 13, 2023, in partnership with the Montgomery County Delegation. In addition, the Council is in the process of planning a youth town hall in Frederick County, and anticipates an additional town hall on the Eastern Shore in late summer/early fall.

2022-2023 Small Grants Project

For the 2022-2023 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 January 2023, and hosted information sessions for potential applicants. The Council received five grant applications and invited the applicants to present their projects to the Council at the March 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 April 2023, the Council approved five $1,000 awards for the following projects:

Punny Student Project - *Baltimore Care Bears (Baltimore City)*
The Punny Student Project will provide students with a carefully curated, pun-centered, gift that is designed to show students that people care about them. There will be several different puns to choose from and the items received will be based on these puns. Students can be nominated by anyone including parents, classmates, and teachers. **Council priority: Emotional and Physical Well-Being**

Low-Flow Faucet Aerator Installation - *Richard Montgomery High School Climate Club (Montgomery County)*
This project will install aerators in six schools that have a flow rate of 1.0gpm or 0.5gpm, resulting in a 55% or 77% reduction in water consumption, respectively. It is estimated that this project will save 70-100 gallons of water per student in Montgomery County Public Schools per year, and between $0.65-0.93 per student per year in water bills. **Council priority: The Environment**

The Caring Closet - *Easton High School Executive Student Government Association (Talbot County)*
The Caring Closet is a closet or designated area that stores resources for students in need. These resources include basic clothing essentials, soaps, deodorant, and hair care products. The closet also holds bags for students to take their care products with them discreetly. **Council priority: Emotional and Physical Well-Being, Poverty, Homelessness**

The FSK Eyrie Literary Magazine - *Francis Scott Key Elementary/Middle School (Baltimore City)*
The FSK Eyrie Literary Magazine is a place for students to publish poetry and prose to express their feelings, emotions, hopes, and dreams. This project will provide printed hardcopies of the 2023 issues to all 587 students to view the work of their peers and increase future participation. **Council priority: Education, Emotional and Physical Well-Being**

Summer STEAM Program - *Easton High School Interact Club (Talbot County)*
The Interact Club will run a free summer STEAM program at its local library. Three sessions will run between two and four hours a day, for five days (one session). During each session, members will teach a topic, perform activities, and provide a snack for students. The members will serve as volunteer teachers at the program, and create the lesson plans. **Council priority: Education**

Grantees must submit an end of project report to the Council by September 30, 2023. The Council will also advocate to the Maryland Children's Cabinet to maintain funding for the Council's Small Grant Project for the 2023-2024 term.

Recommendations for 2023-2024 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, and (3) recommendations for improvement next year. Below are the results of the reflection activity. The Council recommends to the 2023-2024 Council to review and consider these ideas for the improvement of the Council and related activities during the 2023-2024 term.

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

- MYAC did a good job at bringing back the in-person advocacy aspect of the Council.
- The in-person events, overall, were meaningful.
- Higher levels of engagement this year.

WHAT DID NOT WORK? WHAT DID YOU NOT LIKE?

- We were unable to be heard in the press conference, since we needed a microphone.
- I feel like we could have been a little more active on the public awareness front.
- Next year, social media presence could be expanded to further connect with Maryland youth.
- The Community Conversation had low levels of attendance.
- We could have done a better job reaching out to people not already involved in advocacy.
- Insufficient outreach to underrepresented communities and regions.
- Lack of connections with the Governor. This was partially due to the change of administration.
- Stronger guidelines of attendance for the meetings.

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

- A larger community presence for the Council.
- More structure to the leadership roles. Potentially, a formal list of job responsibilities for Committee Chairs.
- Next year, meetings should be fully in-person, we need to discourage the hybrid option.
- Transportation assistance and stronger incentives to attend in-person.
- More outreach to Western Maryland.
- The information session for the grant application should not be mandatory.
- Better communication with counties and regions.

WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT YOU LEARNED OR GAINED THROUGH YOUR EXPERIENCE ON THE COUNCIL

- Testimony, in-person visits, and advocacy helped to introduce me to the legislative process.
- I learned about developing well-rounded policy perspectives.
- I learned how easy it is to engage in policy during the legislative session.