Maryland Youth Advisory Council 2025-2026 Annual Report



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

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

Table of Contents

Table of Contents **1**
Letter From The Chair **2**
Executive Summary **3**
Background and Mission of the Council **4**
2025-2026 Applications at a Glance **5**
2025-2026 Council at a Glance **7**
2025-2026 Maryland Youth Advisory Council Roster **7**
2025-2026 Council Meeting Overview **10**
Council Committees **13**
Legislative Committee 13
Community Initiatives Committee 16
Youth Grants Opportunities (YGO) Committee 17
Other Committees, Programs and Partnerships **19**
Annual Community Conversation 19
University of Maryland Partners with Maryland Youth Advisory Council 20
2026 Thriving IRL (In Real Life) Advocacy Day 20
Youth Town Halls 21
Governor Wes Moore ENOUGH Year Two Celebration 22
Additional Partnerships 22
What's New With MYAC **23**
Councilmember Recognitions **24**
Memories, Words of Wisdom and Acknowledgments **25**

Letter From The Chair

To Governor Moore, Members of the Maryland General Assembly, and the Youth of Maryland,

I am incredibly proud to present the Annual Report of the Maryland Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) for the 2025-2026 term. This year the Council demonstrated an unwavering commitment of service to the youth of Maryland, and displayed the impact that engaged youth can make.

This year, MYAC has made strides towards greater youth involvement in the actions of the Council. Additionally, the Council has continued to identify critical topics affecting our peers and advocate for policies which address the most pertinent issues. Council members have demonstrated incredible dedication and commitment; outside of our monthly meetings, members attended a number of external conferences and events.

We addressed current youth-affecting topics including resource equity, mental health, safe school and community spaces, and social justice. This platform was developed through consultation of youth during our annual Community Conversation, which convened more than 60 youth leaders, partners, and policymakers. This platform directed us to champion bills we believe will create a more equitable and supportive environment for all young people in Maryland and expand our Youth Grants initiative, empowering more youth-led and youth-supported projects across the state. I am also incredibly proud of our expanded partnerships, and the publishing of our inaugural MYAC newsletter.

This report outlines the significant achievements of the 2025-2026 Council, highlights our key initiatives, and provides recommendations for the incoming 2026-2027 council year.

I could not be more grateful, proud, and appreciative to have worked alongside the council members. Their commitment to making a difference in the lives of young Marylanders is deeply inspiring. I also want to recognize **Lorena Wu, Council Historian**, for assembling this report and documenting the work of the Council; and **Mysiki Valentine, Council Advisor,** for working in and behind the scenes at all times to allow the Council and its members to flourish, and being someone to look to at all times.

Serving as Chair was truly a badge of honor I will always wear with pride. Moreover, I am joyful to have watched my fellow council members grow into strong, competent leaders and champions of the future. It is with great pride that I leave the future of youth advocacy in these capable hands.

Sincerely,



Graham Snyder
Chair, Maryland Youth Advisory Council

Executive Summary

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) is a group of youth that **amplify 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 diversity, create partnerships with government agencies, community organizations, and private stakeholders to work together to channel resources and advance policies that drive meaningful, youth-centered change across the state.

During the 2025-2026 term, members participated in various activities to impact the community: (*in chronological order)*

- Held **10 monthly hybrid meetings between the months of September to 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 60 young people from across the state to participate in MYAC's annual hybrid Community Conversation** to inform and prioritize legislative objectives and engaging with Governor's Office for Children leadership;
- 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 twenty (20) individual and group meetings with key legislators to advance priorities such as the **Blueprint for Maryland's Future** and **voting rights for student members of the Board of Education;**
- Tracked and supported bills of interest, and **provided written and oral testimony** during the 2026 legislative session;
- Engaged with federal representatives during the legislative session, including **Representative Johnny Olszewski** and **Senator Chris Van Hollen,** discussing issues such as immigration enforcement, higher education, and school construction.
- Co-led **Youth Advocacy Day, in partnership with the Maryland Out of School Time Network** (MOST), virtually training over 40 young people on ways to engage and advocate to the Maryland General Assembly;
- **Expanded the Youth Grant Opportunities Initiative**, where eight (8) youth-led organizations were selected to receive $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, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, 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.

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

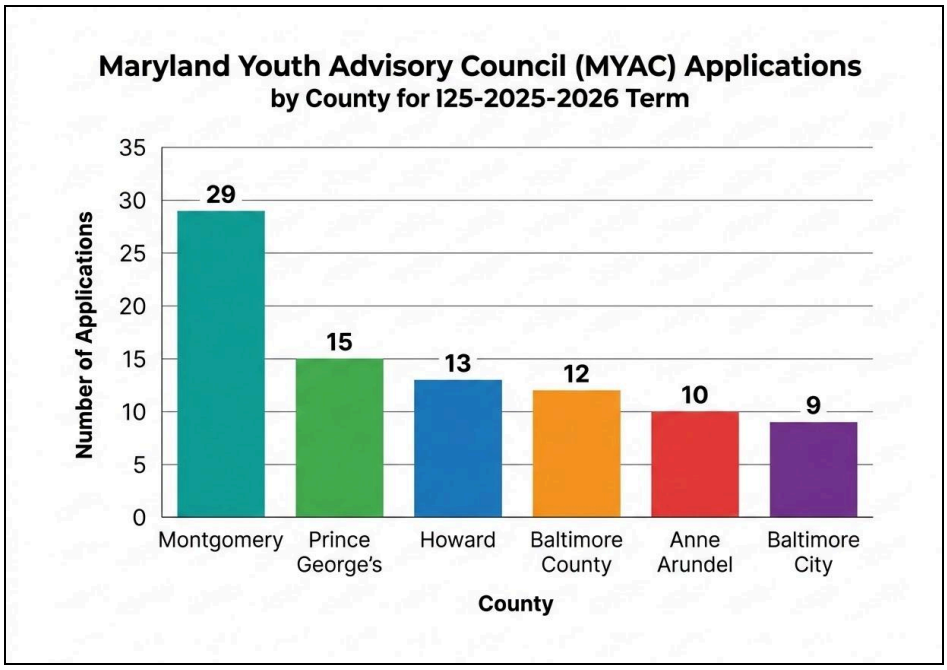
- Inform the Governor and the General Assembly of issues concerning youth, including offering testimony on these issues before legislative bodies;
- Examine issues of importance to youth, including education, a safe learning environment, employment opportunities, strategies to increase youth participation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

2025-2026 Applications at a Glance

The 2025-2026 application period was from March 12 - June 30, 2026, and garnered **136 total applications** from young people representing **24 different counties.** Young people submitted application forms and supporting documents, including resumes and reference letters via the Governor's Office for Children website.

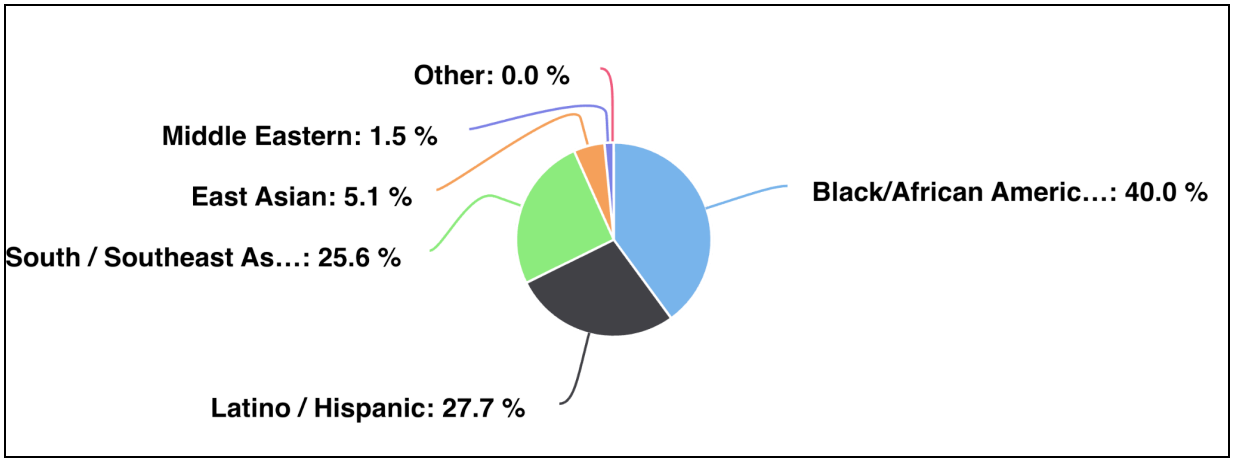
MYAC received the largest number of applicants from Montgomery County with 29 applicants, Prince George's County with 15, Howard County with 13, Baltimore County with 12, Anne Arundel County with 10, and Baltimore City with 9 applicants.



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 2025–2026 application period, **Black/African American** applicants made up the largest group, accounting for about 39% (53 applicants). **Latino or Hispanic American** applicants comprised 27% (37). Asian communities followed, with **South / Southeast Asian** at

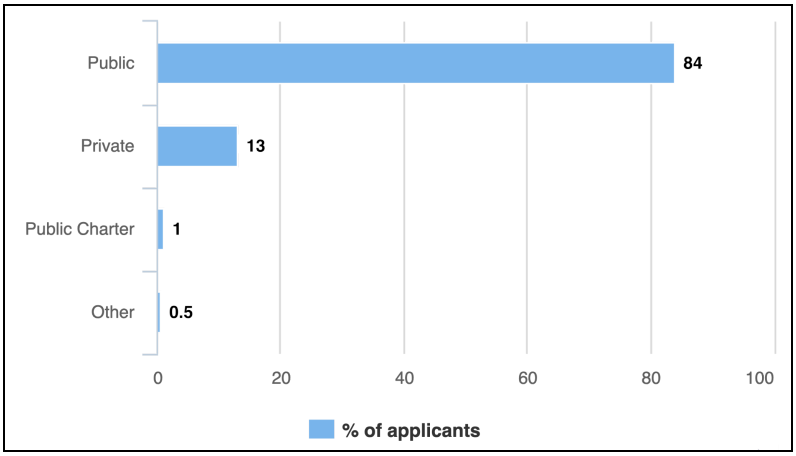
25% (34) and **East Asian** at 5% (7), while **Middle Eastern / Arabic** and **Other** groups represented the remaining pool.



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.

The applicant pool reflects a diversity of educational environments**: Public (115), Private (18), Public Charter (2), and Other (1).**



Representation across grade levels is robust, with **50 Juniors, 33 Sophomores, 30 Seniors, 14 Freshmen, and 9 College Students**. Gender diversity in applications includes 85 Females, 48 Males, 3 Non-binary/Gender Diverse, and 1 Other.

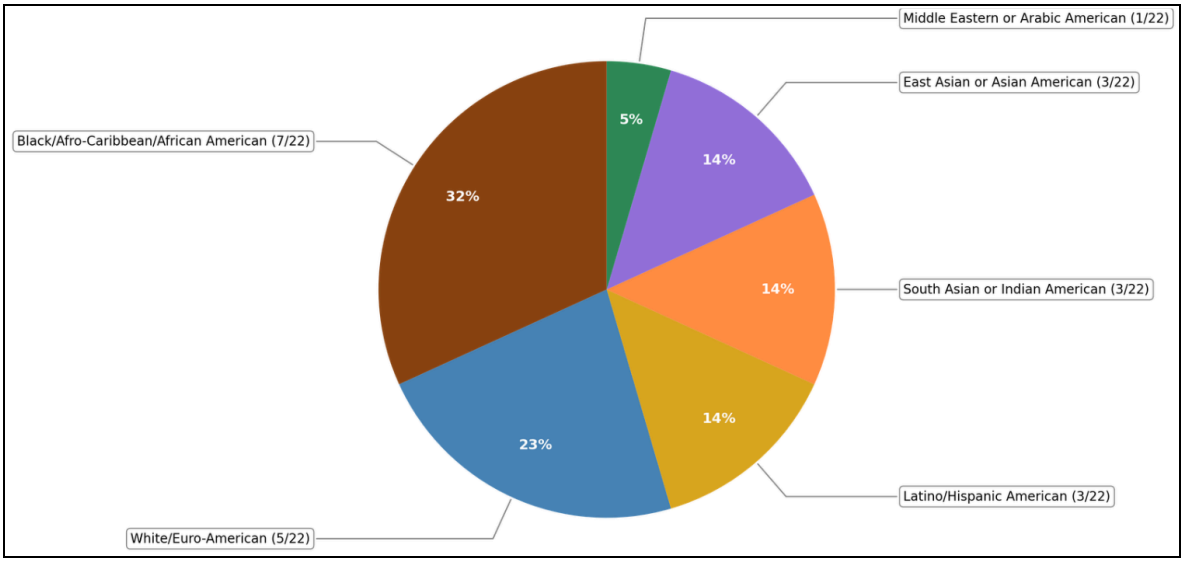
2025-2026 Council at a Glance

The 2025-2026 Council is composed of 24 members, representing **15 counties, 18 high schools, and 3 colleges/universities**. The Council includes Eastern Shore representation from Talbot and Wicomico counties. Baltimore County and Montgomery have the largest representation on the Council. Council member ages range from 15-23 years old.

In addition, 71% of total members (17/24) live in ENOUGH counties, representing eight (8) ENOUGH communities: Anne Arundel, Baltimore County, Baltimore City, Charles, Frederick, Montgomery, Prince George's, and Washington.

Ethnicity (Out of 22 reported): Black/Afro-Caribbean/African American – (31%), White/Euro-American - (22%), Latino/ Hispanic American – (13%), South Asian or Indian American – (13%), East Asian or Asian American – (13%), and Middle Eastern or Arabic American – (4%).

Council Make-Up



2025-2026 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 a two-year term, ensuring the Council benefits from experienced members who coach, guide, and support new members. This year, MYAC continued to foster a welcoming environment by introducing first-year members to second-year members in an introductory joint meeting over the summer. Through leadership and partnership 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.

2025-2026 MARYLAND YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL EXECUTIVE BOARD (per statute §9-2701(f), as elected by Council members at the first meeting of the year):

Chair: Graham Snyder
Vice Chair: Joyce Yun
Secretary: Lucia Zaklin
Legislative Committee Chair: Qamryn Askew
Legislative Committee Vice Chair: Evangeline Roath (*appointed by Chair)*
Community Initiatives Chair: Mark Li
Community Initiatives Media Officer: Chloe Cato (*appointed by Chair)*
Historian: Lorena Wu *(appointed by Chair)*
Executive Board Members: O'Marie Barnes, Jefferson Vasquez-Reyes *(appointed by Chair)*

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 positions of Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Legislative Committee Chair, and Community Initiatives Chair.

At the discretion of the Chair 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 2024
Qamryn Askew, Baltimore City - University of Maryland, Baltimore County
David Renderos, Montgomery County - Montgomery College

Appointed in 2025
Caitlyn Davis, Baltimore County - New Town High School

APPOINTED BY THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES

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 in 2025
No appointments were made

APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

Appointed in 2024
Joyce Yun, Howard County - Glenelg Country School

Appointed in 2025
Mark Li, Howard County - River Hill High School
Evangeline Roath, Anne Arundel County - Archbishop Spalding High School

NOMINATED BY THE MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT COUNCILS

Appointed in 2024
Lorena Wu, Montgomery County - Poolesville High School

Appointed in 2025
Peter Jin, Wicomico County - James M. Bennett High School
Arpita Vijay, Montgomery County - Walter Johnson High School
Safora Noor, Baltimore County - Towson High School

NOMINATED BY THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND STUDENT COUNCIL

Appointed in 2024
Graham Snyder, Washington County - University of Maryland, College Park
Jefferson Vasquez-Reyes, Prince George's County - University of Maryland, College Park

Appointed in 2025
No appointments were made

NOMINATED BY THE MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION - STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

Appointed in 2024
No appointments were made

Appointed in 2025
No appointments were made

NOMINATED BY THE MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL MANAGEMENT BOARDS

Appointed in 2024
No appointments were made

Appointed in 2025
Chloe Cato, Anne Arundel County - Century High School

Khania Charlton, Harford County - Harford Technical High School
Shiza Gondal, Talbot County - Easton High School
Isaiah Gregory, Baltimore City - Baltimore Design School

2025-2026 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 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 2025-2026 term, the Council held hybrid meetings once a month from September to June. Meetings were held on Saturday afternoons in Annapolis. All meeting dates and times are available on the Council's website.

ON-BOARDING AND SOFT LAUNCH MIXER, SEPTEMBER 13, 2025: The Council began the year with a soft launch mixer to welcome new members and refresh returning members. This meeting was devoted to interaction between members to facilitate an inviting atmosphere for the entire year among incoming council members and discussion about the Council's structure and functions.

MEETING #1: SEPTEMBER 27, 2025



The Council's first meeting was a productive one, opening with welcoming remarks and an activity that enabled council members, returning and new, to connect beyond the surface. Members participated in an overview of MYAC's structure, procedures, and resources, as well as member and council responsibilities. The presentation was followed by a team-building activity that entailed applying this knowledge, allowing new members to see what MYAC looks like in action. Shortly after, annual elections took place for this year's council-wide and committee leadership. The newly-appointed chair then closed the meeting with a segment on MYAC's partnerships, next steps, and announcements.

MEETING #2: OCTOBER 25, 2025

The second meeting of the Council began with the announcement of the newly appointed members of the Executive Board. Following this exciting proclamation, Leopold Spohngellert, the Deputy Director of the ENOUGH Initiative, participated in a discussion with council members concerning ways young people can get involved with the ENOUGH Initiative. The Legislative Chair then delivered an engaging presentation, breaking down the structure and processes of the Maryland General Assembly (MGA). This presentation led to planning for the upcoming Community Conversation covering logistics and role assignment. To wrap up the meeting, members took turns sharing achievements and updates to foster council connection and shared goals.

MEETING #3: NOVEMBER 15, 2025



The Council's November meeting was a highly collaborative and productive one, where after welcoming remarks from the Legislative Chair, Qamryn Askew, council members got to work preparing for the upcoming Community Conversation. The Council assigned roles, worked on outreach, and drafted the event's agenda. Members also participated in an engaging legislative workshop, each getting an opportunity to explore the Maryland General Assembly (MGA) website. This was followed by committee meetings, allowing members to check in with their respective chairs. The meeting wrapped up with a brief overview of the Youth Grant Opportunity (YGO) timeline, which included application deadlines and information session dates.

MEETING #4: DECEMBER 6, 2024



The Council's December meeting was a huge success with the execution of its annual Community Conversation. The convening began with a warm welcome and event preparation. The Community Conversation opened with introductions and a Q&A with GOC Deputy Special Secretary Eric Morrissette, who shared insights on advocacy and leadership. Attendees then transitioned into small-group discussions on key issues, later reconvening to share takeaways from their conversations. Following these discussions, Q&A sessions featuring previous Youth Grant Opportunity (YGO) recipients and MYAC members took place. The Community Conversation concluded with an awards ceremony recognizing outstanding individuals and organizations, ranging from past grant recipients to former council members. Council members wrapped up the meeting by distributing thank-you bags, taking photos, and cleaning up.

MEETING #5: JANUARY 17, 2026

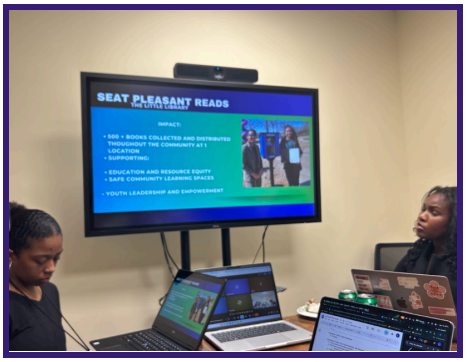
The virtual January meeting of the Council was centered around legislative preparation and policy discussion. After reviewing the progress of the Youth Grant Opportunity (YGO) committee, members engaged in a discussion on cell phone policy with Senior Advisor to the Governor, Cheryl Bost. Council members then transitioned into planning for upcoming Advocacy Days, which was followed by a meeting with Amy Louttit and Angel Drake to discuss their Youth Homelessness Systems Improvement (YHSI) program. The meeting concluded with preparation for the Maryland General Assembly (MGA) legislative session and the Community Initiative Committee's proposed town halls.

MEETING #6: FEBRUARY 21, 2026

The Council's February meeting began with a focus on Advocacy Day preparation, including

discussion of key legislation and an overview of the event's agenda. Members then approved previous meeting minutes, and Youth Grant Opportunity (YGO) Committee Chair O'Marie Barnes provided an update on applications as the review process began. The meeting concluded with updates on future partnerships, including the Annapolis 101 presentation and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, followed by a conversation led by Mr. Valentine and Ms. Powell on mentorship, the MYAC newsletter, and a potential social media campaign.

MEETING #7: MARCH 14, 2026



The March meeting of the Council was largely devoted to the first round of Youth Grant Opportunity (YGO) finalist presentations. YGO Chair Barnes opened with a brief recap of the subcommittee's selection process before fourteen of the twenty chosen finalists presented their projects, each covering their mission, timeline, budget, and expected impact. Council members then discussed the presentations and got a preview of the six remaining applicants presenting on March 21st. Following the final round of presentations, which occurred a week after the March meeting, the full council casted an e-vote to select the grant winners. The meeting wrapped up with a few announcements, including YGO Chair O'Marie Barnes' Harvard University application status and action items for members to look out for in the coming week.

MEETING #8: MAY 9, 2026



The Council's May meeting highlighted several facets of the Council's operations and hopes for the future. Chair Graham Snyder and Community Initiatives Chair Mark Li spoke through partnerships and Media Officer Chloe Cato showcased new logo ideas. Much of the time allocated to committee work centered around MYAPP (MYAC applications) for the next year. Community Initiatives Chair Mark Li and committee recorded an advertising video promoting MYAC applications, and much time was spent on discussion revolving accountability and recruiting members who will be fully involved and engaged. Council members then discussed the End-of-Year presentation and divided up work. Further time was spent on brainstorming alumni-network and member connection methods to foster a tighter-knit MYAC community beyond member council terms.

MEETING #9: JUNE 18, 2026



The Council provided its End of Year (EOY) presentation to the Governor's Office for Children (GOC) staff, where the Council detailed its legislative and youth outreach successes. After opening remarks and introductions, councilmembers took turns presenting various updates and ideas to an audience of GOC staff. Updates included statistics on the current applications, youth town halls, legislation the Council worked on, and the introduction of the official MYAC Newsletter. Throughout the presentation, councilmembers received questions and feedback from the attendees, creating an open and collaborative environment. Following the presentation, Special Secretary Martin presented official citations by Governor Wes Moore to second-term members. After taking photos, attendees began to file out. Council members stayed behind for announcements, including the announcement of an end-of-year celebration by Vice Chair Yun.

Meeting minutes are available on the MYAC webpage here.

Council Committees

Legislative Committee

This year's Legislative Committee, led by *Chair Qamryn Askew and Vice Chair Evangeline Roath,* built a strong foundation for MYAC's legislative engagement by establishing a clear understanding of the Maryland General Assembly (MGA) 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. Continuous written and oral testimony throughout the legislative session ensured the Council's strong presence in advancing bills that support youth statewide.

In preparation for the 2026 legislative session, the Committee:

- **Established Council-wide legislative priorities** informed by youth concerns from the annual Community Conversation. The 2025-2026 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–MGA 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.

2026 Legislative Priorities
During the 2025-2026 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 from early through late education.

II. Increasing Mental Health Resources
   A. Increase the effectiveness of programs, and better integrate counselors and Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs).

III. Youth Mentorship
   A. Implement programs to educate parents, adults, and other caretakers to refine their mentor roles.

Priority #3 Safe School and Community Spaces

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

C. Promote infrastructure to promote safe travel to educational and community destinations

II. Developing Third Spaces for Students
   A. Support environments for students to remain engaged outside of school environments.
   B. Enhance youth involvement opportunities in community groups and spaces.

Priority #4 Social Justice

I. Restorative Justice Practices Towards Conflict Resolution
   A. Address physical, mental, and verbal harm inflicted on individuals and communities.
   B. Promote accountability practices.
   C. Apply through 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, the 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 2026, the Legislative Committee:

- **Updated the bill-tracking spreadsheet weekly**, with each member adding a minimum of two bills per month.
- Tracked and analyzed **almost 100 bills across priority areas**.

For each bill, council members detailed hearing dates, committee assignments, recommended council positions, and noted whether or not a testimony was submitted. Council members voted on positions during general meetings, determining which bills warranted testimony or further advocacy.

Legislative Expansion on the National Level

Not only did the Council see many legislative successes during the Maryland General Assembly's Legislative Session, but notably, the Council expanded its scope to the national level. Council members had great opportunities to meet with Congressman Johnny Olszewski and Senator Chris Van Hollen's staff, where discussions of interest pertained to youth issues such as school safety and gun violence. Additionally, at the Prince George's County Youth Town Hall, Congressman Glenn Ivey was one of our many policymaker participants who shared his wisdom on the town hall's legislative panel.

2025-2026 MYAC Bill Tracker

The 2025-2026 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.

Beyond Bill Tracking - 2026 Forward
To enhance their advocacy pre, during, and post-legislative sessions, the Public Awareness committee has embarked on a long-term strategic plan to grow visibility, encourage community engagement and make more training available 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.
- **ENOUGH Legislative Engagement:** MYAC plans to continue co-leading Youth Advocacy Days and trainings in Annapolis for in-person meetings between legislators and Council members. In coming years, the Council seeks to have ENOUGH youth councils, advisory boards, and action teams lead advocacy day with support from MYAC.
- **Community Transparency:** The Council seeks to publish the bill tracker, previous newsletters, and reports to the community during the legislative season to increase transparency and youth engagement.

Community Initiatives Committee

Under the leadership of *Community Initiatives Chair Mark Li* and *Vice Chair Jefferson Vasquez-Reyes,* the Community Initiatives Committee 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, Facebook, and LinkedIn 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.
- 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 2026-2027 MYAC Application** cycle.
- Published the Council's first-ever newsletter rendition.

Event Promotion & Outreach
While maintaining the Council's annual programs–this year, members sought out ways to **bolster outreach and events through the Community Initiatives 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
    - Youth Law Camps
    - "Annapolis 101" at the University of Maryland, College Park

MYAC Newsletter

This year MYAC worked to ensure a specialized and targeted online space was generated for young people and families all across Maryland to gather insights about their work and upcoming events. In **June of 2026, the Community Initiatives Committee alongside MYAC's advisor and the GOC established an official MYAC newsletter** with the GOC office. The newsletter 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 2026–2027 term, the Community Initiatives Committee will be developing several forward-looking initiatives to continue expanding youth engagement, including:

- **Alumni Network:** A community hub of current and past MYAC members to engage in mentorship, career development, and networking.
- **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 2026-2027 Council term.

Youth Grants Opportunities (YGO) Committee

The Children's Cabinet Interagency Fund (CCIF), supports meeting logistics, operations, transportation, events, and special projects. Since 2023, the Council has allocated $5,000 of its annual budget to fund small projects through a youth-led grantmaking opportunity. The Council awards funding to organizations that are youth-led and adult-advised, with strong alignment to MYAC's annual legislative priorities.

For the 2024–2025 year, the Council announced $5,000 to support youth-led organizations

working to tackle key issues through the State's Youth Grant Opportunity. This year, MYAC expanded its Youth Grant Opportunity from 5 to 8 awards – the largest grantee cohort since the launch of this initiative in 2023. The expansion in grantees reflects a growing motivation to directly invest in youth-led organizations tackling youth concerns and needs.

"In 2025, the GOC motivated the MYAC to deepen our impact to reach more young people in Maryland. Charged by our Chairman, my team was honored not only to increase our grant-giving this year, but also to meet the Governor's commitment to counties with ENOUGH (Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments, and Households) communities." **- O'Marie Barnes**

Grantees were chosen based on their alignment with the Council's legislative priorities, area of service including, ENOUGH communities, project impact, and fiscal feasibility. All finalists presented a 5-minute proposal to the full Council before awardees were announced.
The eight awardees represent a diverse and dynamic cross-section of Maryland's youth-led nonprofit community, spanning seven counties and tackling issues including gang prevention, financial literacy, multilingual equity, composting, and the Governor's Young Men and Boys initiative.

The FY26 Youth Grant Awardees:

- **Budget Buddy** – Youth Entrepreneurship and Fiscal Well - Being (Montgomery)
- **CAPA-Green** – EcoKids: Hands-On Environmental Learning (Howard)
- **Compostology** – Composting Curriculum and In-School Bins w Collection (Montgomery)
- **Every Girl Needs a Pink Suit** - Female Youth Empowerment & Mentorship (Prince George's)
- **LUMA Project** - High School Supports for Multilingual Learners (Baltimore)
- **Shine Bright Futures** - College Readiness Workshops and Skill Building (Prince George's)
- **Village Learning Place** – Intercultural Connectivity & Celebrations (Baltimore City)
- **Young Men of Distinction** – Youth Leaders in Peace Cohort (Somerset)

Other Committees, Programs and Partnerships

Annual Community Conversation



Each year, the **Community Conversation** provides a forum for young people to talk about their daily experiences, including the challenges that they face. The insights gathered during these conversations serve as the foundation for MYAC's legislative platform and advocacy priorities. In December 2025, MYAC hosted a hybrid event, which combined in-person and virtual small group sessions, that engaged over **60 youth** from across Maryland. Between the four in-person and virtual small groups with over ten youth in each, participants discussed topics ranging from issues in school, mental health, violence and policy impacting personal livability. The most notable topics talked about were immigration safety, substance use, budget cuts, the Maryland Blueprint for Education, and responsible AI integration.

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 2025 Community Conversation also marked a year of strong partnership engagement, with organizations such as **Regional Student Government Associations** joining the conversation. Furthermore, participants at the Community Conversation had the privilege of hearing the GOC Deputy Special Secretary presentation on civic engagement.

By crediting key supporters through MYAC's first-ever rendition of the council's **Impact Awards**, the Community Conversation also transformed into a setting of recognition:

- **Powerful Partnership:** Ellie Mitchell and the MOST Network
- **Council Member of the Year:** Folashade Epebinu
- **Youth Grant Impact Award:** The RAY Foundation

Opportunities for Growth in 2026:

- Broaden outreach to underrepresented youth in Western Maryland and the Eastern Shore.
- Strengthen follow-up with attendees to keep them engaged in MYAC initiatives, such as with newly created newsletter.

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:

- Co-branded and Co-owned presentation has been produced and published
- The council will include an ENOUGH officer in the 2026-2027 session, and is prioritizing providing Annapolis101 resources to ENOUGH communities.
- The council has facilitated the Annapolis101 workshop to Maryland Out of School Time Network.
- The Annapolis101 resource is available and accessible online through the Maryland Center for Democracy and Civic Engagement.

Second Stage Program Goal 2026-2027:

- Deepen relationships with other University of Maryland and statewide partner organizations.
- Expand Annapolis101 access by ENOUGH communities and community organizations.
- Create structure for "request a facilitator" function where Council Members can provide legislative training to organizations.

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:

- **Summer 2027** - Youth Engagement Tours: utilizing town halls 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 workshops.

- **2027 & 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. Refining a "train the trainer" model for ENOUGH community leaders to empower ENOUGH communities to participate in the state legislative process.

2026 Thriving IRL (In Real Life) Advocacy Day

On March 9, 2026, MYAC members joined tens of youth and youth-serving organizations at the

Thriving IRL Advocacy Day in Annapolis, hosted in partnership with the Maryland Out-of-School Time (MOST) Network. Prior to this flagship event that brought together over **50 youth** from across the state, MYAC members Graham Snyder and Lorena Wu presented to attendees about the legislative process. This Advocacy Day allowed young people to meet with lawmakers and advocate on **over 50 bills** that impact Maryland's youth.

MYAC member Evangeline Roath met with several key legislators, including Delegate Dylan Behler. In these meetings, she shared the Council's **2026 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 MYAC's most impactful outreach opportunities that allows the Council to empower 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.

In 2026, the Council further expanded the initiative by partnering with Prince George's County's **City of Hyattsville and Hyattsville Youth Council** to host a "Youth Town Hall" bringing together local elected officials, students, **Congressman Glenn Ivey MD-04**, and young leaders who are doing the work of progress.

This event was attended by over 30 young people and is another example of the Council's localized approach to empowering its constituency.

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 these town halls are incorporated into MYAC's ongoing advocacy agenda, ensuring the youth voice represented by the council is sourced from the people on the ground.

In addition to Frederick and Prince George's, MYAC is actively working to expand its town hall

footprint through upcoming partnerships with **Montgomery County, Anne Arundel County, and Baltimore City**. 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 town hall 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 Year Two Celebration



Members of the Council had the opportunity to attend **the Governor's ENOUGH Initiative event at the Weinberg Y in Waverly** on December 11, 2025, where Governor Moore celebrated the program's first year in action and highlighted grantees' exceptional work. At this event, the Governor officially announced the second year of the ENOUGH Initiative and major funding expansions to the program.

MYAC members gained further insight on the ENOUGH Initiative strategy. Council members engaged directly with youth, families, and community leaders, and also met the President of the State Board of Education, Dr. Josh Michael and Special Secretary of the Governor's Office for Children, Carmel Martin.

Additional 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 Days and legislation training.
- **National Academies of Sciences** – Council members served as youth leaders to organize youth-involved activities for the *Digital Tools for Youth Mental Health Leadership Summit:the Children's Forum*.
- **Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health** – Council members attended the *A Call to Action: The Second Lancet Commission on Adolescent Health and Wellbeing* conference and provided opening remarks at a conference surrounding a mental health friendly Baltimore City.

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 incoming members, which have been implemented this year and will continue to be.

Current Improvements

- **Onboarding new members:** Understanding the anxiety joining the Council can bring to new members, the Council held their Meet and Greet pre-session for all new members prior to the first Council meeting over the summer.
- **Partnerships and Collaboration:** As the Council's scope has continued to expand, so has its partnerships. Through collaborations with ENOUGH, the MOST Network, University of Maryland, and many other organizations, MYAC's work is reaching corners of the state, the country, and even the world.

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 referrable 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 in ENOUGH communities, and 2.) Launching grant application process prior to the annual Community Conversations event.

Councilmember Recognitions

"*Incredibly, the Maryland Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) has a track record of supporting and creating Student Members of the Board of Education (SMOBs). This year, I had the honor of a lifetime to be elected by over 500 student leaders and appointed by Governor Wes Moore to serve as the Maryland State SMOB. I am deeply grateful to all of those who supported me throughout this process, and cannot wait to represent almost 900,000 students statewide and enact change throughout my term, starting on July 1, 2026!*" - **Lorena Wu**

"*I am very grateful to have the opportunity to represent MYAC/youth when I attended the Women's Hall of Fame event where I had the chance to meet Lieutenant Governor Aruna Miller and Maryland First Lady Dawn Moore, County and State elected officials to be able to tell them about the work MYAC is doing. Additionally, as a youth representative from the organization CHEER, one of the ENOUGH grantees, I am very pleased to be able to be part of the development of partnerships that has been formed between CHEER and MYAC. In addition to being youth representative for coalitions and other organizations that have partnered with CHEER, I enjoy working with the local community, county, state on addressing youth challenges that youth/families are facing. It is also great to be able to take part in helping to find resolutions for each challenge.*" - **David Renderos**

"*I published a research paper called 'Proposed Need for Processed Meat Carcinogen Warning Labeling' in the journal 'Critical Debates in Humanities, Science and Global Justice.*'" - **Evangeline Roath**

"*I am immensely honored to have been elected by over 57,000 Howard County students to serve as the 39th Student Member of the Board of Education. I will assume this role in stewarding the student voice, diversity, and education experience beginning in August of 2026 through June of 2027. I am extremely grateful to have had this opportunity to meet so many bright and talented peers across the county, and I look greatly forward to ensuring that our county remains committed to prioritizing the integration of our students into the policymaking process.*" - **Mark Li**

Memories, Words of Wisdom and Acknowledgments

"*Serving as the Chair of MYAC this year has been an incredibly rewarding and fulfilling experience. Being able to utilize my role to foster growth and opportunity for council members and promote improvement in our communities was so meaningful. Sitting on the council provides you an amplified voice, a seat at the table, and exposure to experiences and lessons you can't learn otherwise. Your role extends far beyond sessions, you are an advocate every day. Representing the youth of Maryland at every scale reaffirmed my pride for our state's youth, and showed me the power of a young person with a voice. I will always be thankful for my experience on the council, and I hope that the council continues to provide opportunities for youth to flourish*." **- Graham Snyder**

"I cannot find the words to express my profound gratitude for and love of my MYAC family. I consider myself exceedingly fortunate to have met these exceptional individuals, and I often look back fondly on the dozens of memories we've all made together. I am beyond grateful to have been able to contribute to the state of Maryland through this council, and I look forward to seeing what horizons MYAC will continue to cross in the coming years. Special thanks to our Advisor Mysiki Valentine, Chairman Graham Snyder, and Historian Lorena Wu." **- Joyce Yun**

"Throughout my term on the Maryland Youth Advisory Council (MYAC), I have felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude and pride in the youth of our state. Serving alongside my remarkable fellow council members has been one of the most formative experiences of my advocacy journey, from organizing our annual Community Conversation and reviewing applications for our Youth Grants initiative, to presenting our End of Year address to the Governor's Office forChildren. This year, I had the unique privilege of serving as the council's Historian, an opportunity that allowed me to further develop my documentation and writing skills through both photography and authoring the Annual Report. I am deeply grateful to MYAC for providing me with an incredible community and countless opportunities for personal and professional growth that I would not have found elsewhere!" **- Lorena Wu**

"*Serving on MYAC has been an incredible lesson on the true power of youth advocacy. From drafting testimony for legislation to seeing the direct impact of our Youth Grants Initiative, every moment with MYAC has proved how much we can accomplish for young Marylanders across the state. I am beyond grateful for the opportunity to serve with my fellow council members and am so excited to see what my second year will bring!*"**- Peter Jin**

"I have absolutely loved my time on the Maryland Youth Advisory Council so far. Through MYAC, I have had opportunities to advocate for youth across the state while learning from the other outstanding youth leaders on the council. Serving on MYAC is an incredible opportunity for both service and growth in our advocacy skills. I am so thankful for MYAC and all the work we do" **- Evangeline Roath**

"Being part of MYAC has been a great privilege and honor, representing not just youth from my county but all youth statewide. It has also helped me to develop new skills such as effective

communication, problem-solving, and community engagement. Having the chance to work with other youth is amazing, as a young person myself, to have the opportunity to engage and participate in youth matters. And most of all, be a voice for local youth, including children, in our local State. I will further this passion and advocacy as I continue to navigate the real life world and apply the skills I have gained from MYAC to my everyday life." **- David Renderos**

"Serving as the Chair of Community Initiatives this past 2025-2026 term has truly been an experience I am immensely grateful for. It was an honor spearheading the council as a first-year member, and having built close relationships with so many of my peers across the state, I cannot imagine where our collective ambition will take our Maryland youth next year. It is the people, the conversations, and the jokes and giggles that make the year all the more special and memorable; I am very proud to have had this opportunity and I very much look forward to continuing to serve our great state and the Governor's Office for Children in my upcoming term." **- Mark Li**

"Getting to be a part of MYAC has easily been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life thus far. It has been such a privilege to get to be surrounded with such incredible, ambitious, and accomplished peers, and it's safe to say that I'll miss them all dearly. I encourage everyone to keep working to find those who are just as supportive and encouraging as my fellow MYAC members have been, and I can't wait to see what the council does next year!" **- Lucia Zaklin**

"Serving in MYAC has been an enriching opportunity. It is encouraging to do meaningful work for our state's youth alongside brilliant and talented high school and college leaders. It makes me hopeful about our democracy and the state's future after seeing MYAC's members be highly engaged and passionate about solving our youth's greatest challenges." **- Jefferson Vasquez-Reyes**

