

STUDENT MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF FREDERICK COUNTY

Applicant Questions

Respond with paragraphs of no more than 250 words per question, not bulleted lists.

- 1. What is your plan to effectively represent all students in Frederick County Public Schools, K-12?**

Now more than ever, student voices need to be heard and represented on the board. While the representation of a county with over 40,000 public school students is a very difficult feat to accomplish, as Student Member of the Board it would be my number one priority. In running for this position last year, I was astonished to learn how many students were unfamiliar with who the SMOB was or what he/she did. As the sole student representative on the BOE, it is imperative that the SMOB communicates with students beyond just those involved in student government, and that the SMOB makes information pertinent to the student body easily accessible to everyone. With social media, it is easier than ever to do exactly that. In my opinion, social media was severely underused by past student members. As SMOB, I would continue the current SMOB's efforts towards increased online activity: communicating with students of all types and consistently pushing out information.

Unfortunately, many elementary school students are not online. To hear their equally important voices, I would take alternate methods to connect with them. Whether it be corresponding with various K-5 teachers or PTSA groups online or talking with students at FCPS events, I would take specific actions to hear their voices as well.

- 2. Describe how you will change the way you manage your time to be able to meet the demands of Board of Education meetings, FCASC meetings, MASC meetings and your own academic and extracurricular demands.**

I am no stranger to a busy schedule: being a student-athlete, above all else, has taught me how to effectively time manage. 3 hour practices 5 days a week with 6+ hour track meets on the weekend have forced me to learn how to optimize my time. The two biggest techniques I've learned are prioritization and using any down time as work time. Should I have the honor of becoming Student Member of the Board, I would highly prioritize duties related to the job. This doesn't mean neglecting my other responsibilities, but rather ensuring that my SMOB responsibilities are fulfilled first before doing anything else. I also recognize that as an overachiever I have a tendency to bite off more than I can chew. To prevent this, I would limit my other extracurricular activities so that I can ensure I am putting my best effort into being a good board member and student representative.

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3. As the Student Member of the Board of Education, what will be your priorities, the policies you might advance, or topics you might wish to discuss?

As previously expressed, my utmost priority would be interacting with the student body. Before addressing my own interests with the board, I would ensure the popular interests of my classmates be addressed first.

Among many of the issues currently most salient to the student body (outside virtual learning) are mental health awareness and racial injustice. In light of online learning and social isolation, mental health awareness and assistance is more important now than ever. Poor mental health and, subsequently, mental illness can be extremely detrimental at a critical point in our young lives. While dialogue regarding mental health is increasing, a certain stigma and misunderstanding still exist, and who better than FCPS to erase that? The possibilities to do so are varied. We could implement a mental health unit into middle school health curriculum, have school counselors encourage kids with sadness or anxiety to speak with them, or organize student groups within each school's SGA to initiate conversation circles for kids facing similar problems. The most important thing is that we let students experiencing mental illness know they are not alone, and erase the stigma among the kids who don't experience it. Similar to mental health, racial injustice around the country has become more apparent the past year. It is the duty of organizations like FCPS to ensure equality of opportunity and protection from discrimination and other unjust issues regarding race. As SMOB I would see that anti-racist policies continue to be implemented.

4. Legislation is being drafted that could provide voting rights to the SMOB. What steps will you take to ensure that you are fully informed of issues on which you may vote?

The ability to represent the student body in Board of Education votes is not a responsibility I would take lightly. In the days leading up to BOE meetings I would use all the resources available to me. I would make frequent visits to the board docs website and other websites relevant to the different issues the BOE discusses, and study the issues at hand. If I were to have any uncertainties or confusion, I would not be afraid to ask questions to gain clarity. After studying the issue's background, description, and possible solutions, if it concerned the student body, I would at once begin inquiring about their opinion through the use of polls and surveys online, and speaking with them. I would ensure that before all BOE meetings I have a firm understanding of the general student consensus on any given topic. After all, representing all of the students in FCPS would be my job (and my honor) as SMOB.