

## JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

November 12, 2025

Testimony of Vivian

In Support of: Senate Bill 367

TESTIMONY

Good afternoon. My name is Viv, and I'm a high school sophomore from Tantasqua. I'm also a youth leader with Students Speak. I'm here today to support Senate Bill 367 because of what I believe it can do for the long term in helping shape the character of the students produced by our schools.

Over the past few weeks, I've spoken with a number of youth-led organizations about the importance of student voice. From both my personal experience and what I've learned from these conversations, it's clear that young people are ready to take charge.

But right now, students rarely have a genuine opportunity to be heard, both within and outside the school setting.

And when we aren't invited to speak, we also lose the chance to listen.

We miss out on the perspectives and experiences that could help us understand one another better. When student voice isn't valued, we grow up believing decisions are made for us, not with us.

However, when students are trusted with real responsibility, like the power to vote on decisions that affect their communities, they begin to think differently / they learn how to listen with empathy to those they may disagree with, how to speak with confidence, and ultimately how to make thoughtful choices that reflect the needs of a broader community.

Developing these skills is so incredibly important in an era when misinformation floods the content we consume, and when so much around us seems intent on dividing us.

And that's where the real power of this bill lies — in the powerful ripple effect that comes with trusting students with a vote. Granting students a vote strengthens engagement not only among student representatives, but also among their classmates who see that their voices can carry weight.

In this way, the bill helps build habits of civic participation that reach far beyond the classroom and prepare us to be active, responsible members of democracy.

We therefore hope you can join us in improving and passing this Bill.

In the long run, I strongly believe that this Bill is about developing informed, compassionate citizens who can participate thoughtfully in democracy; citizens that might even one day hold stations of power like yours and serve with the same care and dedication.

Thank you for your time.