

Hello everyone, my name is Lillian Holden. I am currently a junior at Catoctin High School, my school's SGA president, and a current member of the Student Member Advisory Council and I want to represent YOU as the next Student Member of the Board of Education. Our generation has experienced unprecedented challenges and, like many of you, I have felt powerless. Every year students vote for who will represent them but are not nearly given enough information to make informed votes. A lot of students have no idea who the SMOB is, what they do, or that they don't have full voting rights. This is why my first priority is to inform students about the SMOB and secure higher voting rights for the student member so that you have actual representation to tackle issues important to you.

Issues like mental health. Students' mental health is at an all-time low. Programs like SEL were implemented to help with students' mental health. Unfortunately, it has not been very effective. A group of students, including myself, decided to change that. We have started implementing student-led SEL, which has resulted in an increase in student participation. Along with increased participation, students have reported SEL to have been more effective and meaningful.

Safety is another big problem. Every school has different experiences and has tried different measures of prevention. If elected, I want to work with all students and staff in FCPS to solve these problems because one solution will not fit all. Improving mental health services is a good first step, but schools would also benefit from expanding programs like Student Voices and implementing restorative practices. This may include peer mediation allowing students to take charge of their lives.

Finally, one thing that I want to work towards, not only as SMOB, but as a student in FCPS is the empowerment of students. Far too often our students are overlooked or underestimated. This is because students are not given all the tools and information they need to succeed, not only as students, but as members of the community. I want students to have the power to make changes in their own schools. We have a board of adults making decisions that affect our everyday lives, but it is not them walking those halls every day, it is not them sitting at those desks every day, it is not their future they're preparing for everyday. It's us, the students. That is why our voices are the most important because it is our life. And no matter what you decide in this election, I just hope you vote for who you believe to be the best for our county because it's OUR SCHOOLS, OUR VOICES, OUR FUTURE. Thank you for your time. Please vote Lillian Holden for Student Member of the Board.