

The Delaware Youth Council: one-page summary

A student-led, nonpartisan campaign asking the General Assembly to create a youth council in Delaware law. The council does not exist yet.

The mismatch

About 210,000 Delawareans are under 18. We hold one standing statewide seat on a state policymaking board: the student member of the State Board of Education. It is non-voting. It lasts one year. It covers education only.

The real problem

This isn't about representation as an idea. Decisions about school policy, mental health services, transit, and jobs get made by people who won't live with them as long as we will.

A student in Delaware who wants to be heard on any of that has one route: the education seat. It belongs to one person a year, and it can't vote. Everyone else writes a letter and hopes someone reads it.

Other states already fixed this

Vermont put a youth council in state law in 2022: up to 28 members, at least one from every county, and the Governor has to meet with them every year.

Nevada's 21 youth legislators can each request one bill a session. Seven of the nine measures they have proposed since 2009 became law.

In San Francisco, the Board of Supervisors has to send any legislation that mainly affects young people to a Youth Commission, which gets 12 days to respond. That commission has existed since a 1995 charter amendment.

Arizona's Governor's Youth Commission seats students from all 15 counties and has run since 1989.

None of this is an experiment. It works, and it has worked for years. Delaware is late.

What we're asking for

A law creating the Delaware Youth Council, housed in the Office of the Governor. A law, not an executive order, so the council survives a change of administration. The Lieutenant Governor serves ex officio, which ties the council to the Senate she presides over.

- Who serves. 15 high school students, five from each county. Delaware residents in grades 9 through 12, ages 14 to 19 at appointment. Public, charter, vo-tech, private, and homeschool students all qualify. The State Board of Education's student member sits as a non-voting member, with one senator and one representative from each county as legislative liaisons.
- How they're chosen. One statewide application, open March 1 to April 15: short essays, one recommendation from any adult who knows the applicant, and an optional resume. A four-person panel in each county interviews and ranks applicants and sends a ranked list by May 15. The Governor appoints five per county by June 1. If no appointment is made by then, each panel's top five are seated automatically. Nobody can stall the council by doing nothing.
- Terms. July 1 to June 30, one full legislative session. Every member reapplies every year and is scored on the same rubric as new applicants. No seat is guaranteed.
- How it runs. A chair, a vice chair, two legislative affairs officers, and two communications officers, elected at the first meeting. Three issue committees chosen each September, each with

members from all three counties. Monthly meetings that rotate among the counties, remote attendance allowed, about 10 hours a month. Open-meeting rules apply.

- Pay. A per-meeting stipend capped at 16 meetings a year, plus mileage. Members are appointed public members, not employees. This is what lets a student with a job serve.
- What it produces. A written report every December 1, after a statewide youth survey and at least one listening session in each county.
- What the General Assembly has to do. Hold a joint hearing of the House and Senate Education Committees on the report by February 15. Every committee named in a recommendation answers in writing within 60 days: act, study, or decline, and why. The answers are published with the report. This is the part that makes the council more than a photo.
- Other powers. The council comments on bills that mainly affect young people, can request one bill a year through the Division of Legislative Services, and meets with the Governor once a year. Executive agencies answer its information requests within 30 days.
- Research fellows. Up to six college students a year, at least one per county team. Any undergraduate or graduate student who lives in Delaware or is enrolled at a Delaware school qualifies, so Delawareans at out-of-state colleges count. A summer track from June through August and a remote academic-year track. Members decide what the report says. Fellows support the research.

What it costs

One full-time coordinator. Stipends capped at about \$12,000 a year in total. Mileage. The council can also accept gifts and grants. That is the whole cost structure.

What happens next

We're collecting names by county right now. Applications for the pilot council and for research fellows open October 1, 2026. After the November election we meet with potential sponsors in all three counties, in both parties. The 154th General Assembly convenes January 12, 2027. We want the bill introduced by March and passed by June 30, 2027.

Supporters add their names at delawareyouthcouncil.org. Legislators and staff: write to us at info@delawareyouthcouncil.org.

Sources

1. U.S. Census Bureau, QuickFacts: Delaware. Population estimate July 1, 2025, and percent under 18. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/DE>
 2. State of Delaware news, April 13, 2026: application opening for the student member of the State Board of Education. <https://news.delaware.gov/2026/04/13/governor-meyer-announces-application-opening-for-student-member-of-state-board-of-education/>
 3. Vermont Statutes, Title 3, Chapter 53, Section 3097. <https://law.justia.com/codes/vermont/title-3/chapter-53/section-3097/>
 4. Nevada Revised Statutes, Chapter 219A. <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/nrs/NRS-219A.html>
 5. San Francisco Charter, Youth Commission. https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/san_francisco/latest/sf_charter/0-0-0-355
 6. Arizona Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family: Governor's Youth Commission. <https://goyff.az.gov/councils-commissions/governors-youth-commission>
- Delaware Youth Council. The campaign to create it. info@delawareyouthcouncil.org