



# PRESS RELEASE

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## THE MARYLAND MUNICIPAL LEAGUE ANNOUNCES 2026 “IF I WERE MAYOR” ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS

**(April 14, 2026) Annapolis, Md.** – The [Maryland Municipal League](#) (MML), which serves as the collective voice of 161 municipal governments, celebrated the 2026 “If I Were Mayor” Essay Contest winners Friday at the Maryland State House. Students shared their thoughts on how they would lead their city and town as Mayor and were recognized by House of Delegates Speaker, Joseline Peña-Melnyk.



*2026 "If I Were Mayor" Contest Winner Celebrate Achievement with MML Leadership*

Utilizing this year’s theme – 90 Years Strong: Where Tradition Meets Innovation – students were asked to envision their communities 90 years into the future and imagine how tradition and innovation have both changed and bettered their communities. Many of the student responses centered on the future of existing municipal traditions, both protecting and improving them for future generations, whether it be community parades with floats which hover, protecting historic Cherry Blossoms with new technology, or incorporating robots to facilitate and clean up Maryland famous crab feasts.

This year’s contest challenge was specifically designed to coincide with the League’s 90th anniversary, celebrating nine decades of municipal leadership. “Tradition is not just a memory—it has the potential to be a living, breathing power which shapes a group of residents in a community,”

shared MML CEO Theresa Kuhns. “Maryland’s oldest city and state capital, Annapolis, is nearly 400 years old. Imagine the traditions its residents have witnessed over those 400 years and the changes experienced.”

This year’s “If I were Mayor, I would...” essay winners are:

**Jacques Hillion**, Worcester Preparatory School - District 1, Berlin  
**Cristian Cruz Martinez**, Maple Elementary - District 2, Cambridge  
**Sarah Ferrarezi Carvalho**, West Townson Elementary 6 - District 3  
**Jamie Orellana**, Lothian Elementary - District 4  
**Kiera Newell**, Bayard Rustin Elementary - District 5, Rockville  
**Esme Bricklemyer**, Spring Ridge Elementary - District 6, Frederick  
**Jett McCormick**, Friendsville Elementary - District 7, Friendsville  
**Sam Morrison**, Paramount Elementary - District 8, Hagerstown  
**Nusaybah Jemil**, Al-Huda School - District 9, College Park  
**Sean Eury**, Churchville Elementary - District 10  
**Anthony DiSimone**, Hampstead Elementary - District 11, Hampstead

Jeannine James, Mayor of La Plata and President of the Maryland Mayors Association, recognized the work of her colleagues while congratulating the contest winner: “With over 58 schools participating, our volunteers read over 891 essays, and you are the amazing 11 winners representing our regions across the state of Maryland. You should be extremely proud of yourself.”



*Speaker Peña-Melnyk Congratulates 4th Grade "If I Were Mayor" Contest Winners*

During the ceremony, Speaker Peña-Melnyk shared encouragement from the Maryland House of Delegates. “I’m so impressed with your essays and your words, and I take my hat off to you.” She also called herself the posterchild of how an education can make a big difference, telling students “You can be anything you want to be, because you’re getting an amazing education in Maryland.”

Run by the Maryland Municipal League and sponsored by the Maryland Mayors Association, the contest is now in its 26<sup>th</sup> year having educated over 50,000 fourth graders across the state. Essays were judged by a team of municipal officials based on displayed knowledge about municipal government and the role of a mayor, creativity, and proper use of grammar. For more information, visit [www.mdmunicipal.org](http://www.mdmunicipal.org).

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### **ABOUT THE MARYLAND MUNICIPAL LEAGUE**

The Maryland Municipal League (MML) was founded in 1936 and serves as the collective voice of 161 municipal governments and the 2 million Marylanders it represents. A voluntary, non-profit, nonpartisan association controlled and maintained by city and town governments, MML works to strengthen and support municipal government through advocacy and the development of effective leadership. Through its membership in the National League of Cities MML offers legislative representation in Washington, urban research programs, and a national municipal government information exchange. MML is the only statewide organization in Maryland composed solely of municipal officials and devoted to the promotion of all branches of municipal administration.