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High school students speak out before the midterms

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HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS SPEAK OUT BEFORE THE MIDTERMS: Nine student leaders from seven urban school districts across the country are in Baltimore today to discuss what they see as the most pressing issues for young people ahead of the midterms. While voting may be out of reach for some who aren't 18 this November, they plan to talk about the importance of civic engagement and voting, in addition to guns, mental health, the #MeToo movement, social justice, equity, immigration and more.

— **The student-led discussion is hosted by the Council of the Great City Schools**, an organization that represents the nation's largest urban school systems, as part of its annual fall conference. The 90-minute discussion will livestream in some classrooms, said 17-year-old Fez Zafar, who's moderating the event.

— **Zafar — a junior at Roosevelt High School in Des Moines, Iowa**, and a student member of the Iowa Board of Education — told Morning Education that students are often disengaged “because they feel like no one is listening to them.” Zafar hopes the discussion gets students thinking about civic engagement, the midterms and voting in the next presidential election. “I think it's important for students to see that there can still be civil discourse when there's disagreement,” he said.

— **Zafar said he expects guns, mental health and school safety** to come up during the discussion. Since the Valentine's Day school shooting in Parkland, Fla., “I think every student has questioned themselves at some point — am I going to be safe today? I found myself thinking about escape routes in each of my classes.” One of the students participating in the discussion, Mei-Ling Ho-Shing, is a survivor of the Parkland shooting, he noted.

— **Joshua Lynn, who turns 16 today**, said he plans to make some “key points” about gun violence and voting, since many of his peers will be eligible to vote in the 2020 presidential election. Lynn attends Baltimore City College and is a student member of the Baltimore City school board. He said he also plans to address the “school to prison pipeline,” which “needs more attention.” Of the event, Lynn said it's “a great opportunity to show people around the country that students actually care.”