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News Release

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Alexandria City Student Takes Top Honors in Fifth Annual VSBA Student Essay Contest *Recognized at the VSBA Conference on Education*

Charlottesville, VA – The Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) proudly announced Leslie Eyeson, an incoming sophomore at Alexandria City High School in Alexandria City Public Schools, as the winner of the 2025 VSBA Student Essay Contest. The announcement was made during a special presentation at the 40th VSBA Conference on Education.

This year's theme, "*Champions for Impact*," sparked a compelling response from students across the Commonwealth. Leslie's essay stood out for its clarity, passion, and perspective, earning her first place and a \$1,000 award generously sponsored by Haney Phinyowattanachip PLLC. In addition to her written work, Leslie's recorded speech demonstrated remarkable poise and conviction.

"Winning the 2025 VSBA Student Essay Contest is truly an incredible honor for me because it allows me to raise my voice for the values I deeply believe in," stated Leslie Eyeson. "My essay is rooted in the idea that true champions act with altruism. They act not for personal gain, but to create lasting change for future generations."

To view Leslie's winning speech, please visit: <https://youtu.be/Zfe6j1dwllQ>

VSBA Executive Director Gina Patterson spoke to the importance of the student essay contest, saying, "Hearing directly from students like Leslie reminds us why we do this work. Their voices are thoughtful, powerful, and essential to shaping the future of public education."

As part of her recognition, Leslie was invited to present her speech in person at the Conference on Education. Her moving delivery resonated deeply with school board members, superintendents, and division leaders from across Virginia, leaving a lasting impression on the audience.

About the Virginia School Boards Association

The Virginia School Boards Association, a voluntary, nonpartisan organization of Virginia school boards, promotes excellence in public education through advocacy, training, and services. The Association offers conferences, information, training, and counseling designed to meet the needs of the Commonwealth's educational leaders.

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