

1 February 2021

Prince George's County House Delegation
Room 207, Lowe House Office Building
Bladen Street, Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: In Favor of PG 506-21 and The Expansion of SMOB Voting Rights

Dear Delegates:

My name is Ninah J. Jackson and I have the privilege of serving as the Student Member of the Prince George's County Board of Education (SMOB) for the 2020-2021 school year; the 41st student to hold this honor. In addition to that, I am a PGCPSS senior at Oxon Hill High School and a long-term resident of legislative District 26. I support PG 506-21 and its mission of expanding the SMOB's authority to vote on matters relating to collective bargaining, capital and operating budgets, school closings, reopenings, and boundaries, and urge you all to do the same.

While I wish I could join the delegation virtually to voice my support, at the time of the bill hearing on Tuesday, February 2nd at 5PM, I will be joining my colleagues and the CEO's administration for the school district's second budget work session of the cycle; a matter that I currently ultimately have no vote on, but heartedly engage with nonetheless.

The SMOB is one of the few individuals on the Board that witnesses and experiences the direct results of decisions rendered, policies passed, and actions made; they're closest to the students - not only because the SMOB is a student, but because we serve the students. Over the course of my campaign and tenure thus far, I've heard the stories, woes, struggles, tales of jubilation, buzzing of excitement, sparkling ambitions, and more of hundreds of thousands of students - and it's with the strength of those students that I continue to stay inspired to ensure that the district's decision-making system stays focused on serving our young people.

The Student Board Member already participates in executive session, reviews capital and operating budgetary items, consults with counsel, engages with advocacy groups, meets with local and state officials, and am privileged to much of the same information made accessible to their counterparts, despite the current restrictions that be. So if the work similar to that of an

adult board member is already being done, then why not give the SMOB the same equal opportunity of representing their constituency: 136,000+ students of Prince George's County Public Schools - my peers, and your children; a right, mind you, that is currently afforded to the Anne Arundel County Student Member and the Montgomery County Student Member.

At a time where our district decision-makers are tasked with the responsibility of not only making sure our school system recovers from the moments that be, but that it's better than it was before - it's imperative that the student voice is given an opportunity to not only be in the room, but at the table.

The expansion of SMOB voting rights would solidify Prince George's commitment to advancing the student voice; it would be a signal to the next generation that they're heard, valued, honored, and trusted.

I thank Delegate Washington for sponsoring this piece of legislation, and I thank the rest of the delegation for their support as well. I am always available to answer any questions or address any concerns you all may have. Thank you.

Ninah J. Jackson
Student Member, Prince George's County Board of Education

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ninah Jackson", written in a cursive style.