

**Oral Testimony from Timothy Nathan Ferrell, Baltimore City Public Schools
Teacher**

District 44A

**SB0031 - Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners – Student Members and
Task Force to Study Compensation and Student Members**

Before the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

1/24/23

Position: FAVORABLE

Good afternoon members of the committee, my name is Nathan Ferrell and I'm a Baltimore city Schools Teacher and district 44A resident. I'm writing to give my full support of SB31.

In addition to being a Spanish teacher in Baltimore Public Schools, I also work closely with students to organize around their needs and amplify their voices. I work with the Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City, I have supervised YouthWorks programs under the Mayor's Office of Employment Development and Youth Services, I support the Planned Parenthood of Maryland Peer Educator program and most important and close to my heart is my experience as a perennial summer school educator where I serve Transitional Age Youth working to achieve their high school diplomas before they age out of the public education system.

Too often students who are more affluent or better connected have access to leadership. Adding a 2nd seat can help to ensure marginalized students, such as the Transitional Age Youth that I serve, are able to work with a fellow student member on the board to better represent students who are in non-traditional situations. Having a 2nd seat would allow for students

experiencing homelessness, students who are immigrants or ESL, students with disabilities and Transitional Age Youth to have a voice about the issues that affect them and their particular communities. It is telling that the current board structure does not allow student members of the board voting rights or the ability to participate in executive sessions. In order to transition away from a superficial and performative board structure, we must affirm the value of our young people and that of the entire enterprise of public education, and treat student members as full members of the board with all rights and privileges as any other commissioner on the board.

Finally I'd like to emphasize as an organizational member of the VOTES (**V**oices **T**owards and **E**lected **S**chool Board) Coalition, this bill is already a significant compromise. We met with members of the school board and the mayor's office over multiple years in good faith discussions after pulling the bill two sessions ago that would have more dramatically restructured the school board. Their concerns and ideas were incorporated into this legislation to ensure that we can move towards a more democratic, transparent, youth centric and effective board.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB31. Thank you.

Sincerely,

T. Nathan Ferrell

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