

**Testimony from Laurel Cratsley, Educational Associate at Baltimore City Public Schools**

**SB0031/HB0153 - 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**

**January 24th, 2022  
Position: FAVORABLE**

Good afternoon, Members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Laurel Cratsley, and I write to you today as both a resident of Baltimore City, and as a 6-year employee and educator in the Baltimore City Public School System.

To teach in Baltimore City, and to be a student in Baltimore City, is an experience so unlike what others in our state and nation can understand. The challenges of this urban school district and its lowest performing schools are often outside the imagination of those without firsthand experience. For this reason, we must do everything in our power to bring those with firsthand experience into the conversation and governing process in a meaningful way.

As an educator, I have borne witness to the constant resource scarcity plaguing our school communities, the unyielding rates of turnover in the building, the ever-present effects of gun violence and mass incarceration that bears down on our students, and the lack of mental health supports in place to serve young people. While I, like the current officials on the school board, may be able to describe these issues, my experience pales in comparison to that of the young people navigating these challenges in real-time.

I urge you to alter the process by which students are chosen and function on the school board by passing SB0031/HB0153. We cannot say we support students if we consistently opt to leave their voices out of the decision-making process. Our school board should be inclusive of individuals who navigate this education system each day, namely by expanding voting rights and the ability to participate in closed/executive sessions to its student member.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB0031/HB0153. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Laurel Cratsley  
Educational Associate, Baltimore City Public Schools