

**Written Testimony on Behalf of VOices Towards an Elected School Board
(VOTES) Coalition - Baltimore City
SB0031 - Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners – Student Members and
Task Force to Study Compensation and Student Members
Before the House Ways and Means Committee
3/29/23
Position: FAVORABLE**



VOices Towards an Elected School Board (“VOTES”) Coalition, is providing written testimony in full support of SB31 to give student members of the board expanded voting rights, the ability to participate in closed/executive sessions, to alter the process by which those students are chosen to be more democratic, and to establish a commission to research and make recommendations on board member compensation and adding a second student member of the board.

The VOTES Coalition consists of educators, parents, students, community members and organizations working to democratize Baltimore City’s School Board. One of our priorities is to ensure the passage of legislation that would transform Baltimore City’s school board into a more representative and accessible model. Senate Bill 031 is an important step to ensure that students and school community members have a voice in their education.

The VOTES coalition prioritizes youth leadership through Student Government Associations, the Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City and youth-led grassroots organizations such as Youth As Resources (YAR) Students Organizing a Multicultural & Open Society (SOMOS) and the Baltimore Student Union (BSU).

On behalf of the VOTES coalition, we thank this committee and its members for advancing this legislation. 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. This legislation is supported by the Mayor of Baltimore, The Baltimore City Schools Board of Commissioners and the CEO of Baltimore City Public Schools. For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB0031. Thank you.

VOTES Coalition