

NAACP Testimony SB 0745 - board member alteration.

Uploaded by: Sweat, Dyotha

Position: FAV



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE (NAACP)
CHARLES COUNTY BRANCH**

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**Testimony of Dyotha R Sweat
President, Charles County Branch of the NAACP
To the Educational, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee**

on

SB-0745: Charles County – Board of Education Membership Alterations

March 3, 2021

Good morning Chair Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Members of the Educational, Health and Environmental Committee.

I am submitting this testimony in support of Senate Bill 0745 Charles County – Board of Election Membership Alterations, on behalf of the Charles County Branch of the NAACP. The CCNAACP strongly supports this bill with amendments because it addresses non-representation a crucial matter of racial and ethnic social justice in Maryland.

Charles county is home to thirty-eight schools and of those schools 10 of 23 Elementary School are located in District 3 & 4, 4 of 8 Middle Schools are located in District 3 & 4 and 4 of 8 High Schools are located in Districts 3 & 4. Charles County elects seven members to govern over our school system. Of those seven members four members are from District 1, two 2 members are from District 2, one member is from District 3 and there is no representation for District 4. There are approximately 10 public schools in Charles County that reside in District 4 with no representation.

Board members elected in At Large process is a violation of the Voter's Rights of 1965 section 2. Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 prohibits voting practices or procedures that discriminate on the basis of race, color, or membership in one of the language minority groups identified in Section 4(f)(2) of the Act. Most of the cases arising under Section 2 since its enactment involved challenges to at-large election schemes, but the section's prohibition against discrimination in voting applies nationwide to any voting standard, practice, or procedure that results in the denial or abridgement of the right of any citizen to vote on account of race, color, or membership in a language minority group.

Senate Bill 0745 also addresses the need to give voice to the student representative on the board. As school districts across the state of Maryland are addressing this very issue of allowing students to have a voting voice on the board. The CCNAACP fully supports students being an active role on the board with the power to vote and not just a member in name.

The choice here is clear. The Maryland Senate should fully support this bill. Therefore, we strongly urge a FAVORABLE Report for SB -0745 Charles County – Board of Education Membership Alteration to change election process of Charles County Board of Education members and grant voting power to Charles County Public School student board member.

Thank you.

TestimonySB0749.pdf

Uploaded by: Ichile-Mckenzie, Ongisa

Position: FWA

To: Maryland General Assembly, Senate Ways & Means Committee
From: Ongisa Ichile-Mckenzie- Director, Southern Marylanders for Racial Equality
Re: SB 0749 Charles County - Board of Education - Membership Alterations
Hearing Date: March 3, 2021

We submit this letter in favor of the proposed bill with amendments proposed herein. The critical need for equity among all areas of Charles County is the issue at hand. With some districts having no representation within the school board, their needs are being unheard and potentially overlooked.

This bill would ensure that all districts have a voice. But it also must go a step further by ensuring that the STUDENTS have a voice. The student board member must have a vote, where currently they may only voice their agreement or disagreement with motions within the school board's purview. Allowing the student member's vote to count offers the chance for us to make good on the lip service that we offer our youth. We tell them that they are the future, that their destinies are in their hands. With this bill, we can finally give them agency within the system that controls so much of their daily lives and future outcomes.

The amendments we propose would also use the four currently established commissioner districts, electing two members per district with one board member, the board president, being at-large. Also, we would amend the 2 year vs. 4 year terms for board members from even/odd numbered districts. They should serve equal term lengths.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ongisa Ichile-Mckenzie', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ongisa Ichile-Mckenzie
Director, Southern Marylanders for Racial Equality

SB749_Favorable_With_Amendments_MarylandYouthAdvis

Uploaded by: Matava, Maya

Position: FWA



Maryland Youth Advisory Council
c/o Governor's Office of Crime
Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services
100 Community Place,
Crownsville, MD 21032

Ian Herd, *Chair*
Marvin Li, *Vice-Chair*
Maggie Harkins, *Secretary*

March 1, 2021

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: SB 749

Position: Supports with Amendments

Dear Chairman Pinsky:

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council (the Council) prides itself on being a group of young adults who work to serve as a voice for youth in the state of Maryland. As leaders in our communities and in our State, and as appointees of the Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, Maryland Association of Student Councils, Maryland Higher Education Commission, and the University System of Maryland, we take every opportunity to advise legislators and the Governor regarding issues facing youth.

The creation of the Council in 2008 follows a long history of youth leadership in Maryland; beginning with the first Student Member of the Board position in Anne Arundel County and subsequent positions created for student leaders throughout the State. Student Members of Boards of Education in Maryland possess an extensive history of advocacy, involvement, and execution of civic responsibility. Students have demonstrated a consistent dedication and commitment to civic engagement and the betterment of their communities through organized student leadership organizations and positions like the Council and the Student Member of the Board of Education position.

Students provide an important and unique perspective in policy-making. The Student Member of the Board of Education provides unparalleled expertise on the matters before the Board given that he/she is enrolled in the school system, experiencing and witnessing the very matters that the Board discusses and votes upon. Students serve as tremendous assets, often highlighting critical points that might otherwise have been overlooked. Students have proven that they are more than capable of making informed decisions and acting appropriately in professional settings, and thus SB 749's inclusion of Student Member voting rights is more than justified.

The Council is proud to represent Maryland's diverse youth aging from 14 to 22 years old. The Council understands the need to ensure that candidates for the Charles County Board of Education are qualified as well as tenured residents of Charles County. However, the Council believes raising the age to run for office to 21 years of age or requiring candidates to be registered voters of three years, a requirement that cannot be met by a legal adult of 18 years age, is not an effective way to ensure those qualifications. The Council encourages amendments to

ensure candidates are qualified whilst allowing opportunity for legal adults of all ages to have the opportunity to serve on the Charles County Board of Education.

The Council, along with the Student Member of the Board of Education, is a testament to the power, importance, and benefits of the youth voice, and we strongly believe that when the youth voice is included with fidelity, there yields great benefits. Moreover, when adults perceive young people as valuable resources that can inform many of the decisions that impact them, they also see an improvement in the quality of the decisions that are made (Zeldin, 2004; Zeldin, McDaniel, Topitzes, & Calvert, 2000). We provide valuable input, insights, and information regarding the lives of young people and identify where there may be unmet needs in young people's lives, and develop solutions to address those needs.

Our lived experiences provide a perspective that lends itself to effective youth policy, particularly when the lives of youth are ever-changing. The closer policy-makers are in tune with the experiences of youth, the more effective youth policies will be, the more empowered and productive youth citizens will become, and the greater benefit there is to the lives of youth as a whole. The Council is confident that SB 749 will ensure the growth of civic engagement within Charles County for decades to come.

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council commends Senator Ellis for sponsoring SB 749, a testament to the value with which Senator Ellis uplifts the student voice and student representation. Senator Ellis's sponsorship of SB 749 stands both as a symbol of the power of the student voice and a recognition by the Senator and Charles County of its merit.

For these reasons, the Council supports SB 749 with amendments and respectfully requests a favorable report from the committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maya Matava". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Maya Matava, Legislative Committee Chair
Maryland Youth Advisory Council

2021 SB 0749 on letterhead.pdf

Uploaded by: McLaughlin, Linda

Position: UNF



TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION to Senate Bill 0749
Charles County – Board of Education – Membership Alterations
Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
March 3, 2021

To: Senator Paul Pinsky, Chair, and members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

From: Linda McLaughlin, Education Association of Charles County (EACC) President

Dear Senator Pinsky, Chair, and members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee,

I am writing to you today to rise in opposition to SB 0749, which would 1. alter the way school board members are elected in districts (where they are all at-large positions currently) and 2. Award full voting rights to the Student Member of the Board. As the President of the Education Association of Charles County (EACC), I speak for over 2,000 certificated educators (teachers, librarians, school counselors, vice principals, principals, specialists and more) who would be impacted as the Board of Education makes decisions that affects their livelihood.

I am not against representation or a diverse population being represented by elected leaders from their community. As a local union leader, I am an advocate for people having voice, and that is where my objection lies. What I object to with this part of the legislation is the process that skipped over voices being heard from the very community that the legislation will possibly “improve.” There was not a conversation with either the Board of Education or the County Commissioners about this proposed change. For legislation that would affect local constituents directly, I would have expected : 1. A conversation/open meeting with the Board of Education members, 2. A conversation/open meeting with the County Commissioners, and 3. A public forum to gather feedback from parents and other community stakeholders. None of these 3 things have happened.

Local bills that represent the wishes and needs of the county should definitely be looked upon favorably when they are presented to the committees in the General Assembly. This bill was not discussed locally, requested locally, or informed by local constituent opinion or feedback. Fithermore, the bill suggestes 6 districts and currently there are 4 County Commissioner districts- if this bill is tp streamline processes and representation, and based on the current existing structure, what is the intent and rationale for 6 districts? Had there been a public forum, constituents could have asked questions such as this(I called Senator Ellis’ office with my questions on the bill, but have yet to receive any return cal).

The second piece of SB0749 that I oppose is the full voting rights for the Student Member of the Board. Student voice is important, but full voting rights for the SMOB are not appropriate. Students should not be subjected to the intense scrutiny (and public pressure) that elected adults are as members on the School Board. Students should not be voting on school boundaries, redistricting, personnel issues, for example- those would all be



Education Association of Charles County

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completely inappropriate. Students do not have the life experience or maturity to make decisions such as these. Student voice is important and a unique perspective that would be a positive inclusion in system decisions. For example, having a student on each district committee would be a positive implementation of student voice. Full voting rights would create a situation as seen in other counties where students could be “lobbied” by adult groups to fulfill their own self-interests. Though this could also happen to an adult BOE member, students should not be subjected to this type of treatment.

I urge the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee to vote against this bill. Though the intent was good, the improvements in representation might be positive, the process that was implemented seemed overreaching and without public and locally elected input. Transparency is of ultimate importance, especially in today’s climate. Democracy in the dark is not democracy, nor does it engender trust or faith in our elected officials.

Sincerely,

Linda McLaughlin

President, Education Association of Charles County
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Scanned from Jesse L. Starkey Administration Build

Uploaded by: Wilson, Tina

Position: UNF



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KIMBERLY A. HILL, Ed.D.
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Board of Education of Charles County

P.O. Box 2770, La Plata, Maryland 20646-0170
(301) 932-6610 - (301) 870-3814
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February 23, 2021

The Honorable Arthur Ellis
302 James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401
[by e-mail arthur.ellis@senate.state.md.us]

Re: Senate Bill 749 Charles County - Board of Education - Membership Alterations

Dear Senator Ellis:

At its February 22, 2021, meeting, the Board of Education of Charles County voted to oppose Senate Bill 749. The Board's concern with the proposal was not based on opposition to all of the provisions of the bill but rather on the concern that there has not been sufficient opportunity for public input into the major changes the bill would implement.

As you know, our community has an interest in who serves on our Board of Education and how those members are chosen. Changing the current structure of the Board of Education would require extensive public input to ensure that the preferences of our parents, employees, and others are reflected in the process. We recognize that ultimately the General Assembly would make the final determination, and that the pandemic may have interfered with opportunities for community outreach, but unfortunately we are not confident that the current proposal has received sufficient public scrutiny.

The Board wants to make it clear that this opposition to Senate Bill 749 is not focused on the substance of the bill, even though there may be provisions the Board would oppose. For example, after holding a public work session in November 2020 and receiving feedback from our community, the Board had previously voted to oppose the granting of any voting rights to the student member. We recognize that other parts of Senate Bill 749 including the proposal to alter the selection process for elected Board members, may prove to be welcomed by the voters. However, we believe it is necessary to have these discussions openly and broadly, and possibly over the summer, before determining support for or specific amendments to the bill.

We look forward to working together with you and members of the Charles County Delegation, as well as the County Commissioners, to gather public feedback and potentially jointly propose legislation next session that could address the issue. We thank you for your continued support of Charles County Public Schools.

Sincerely,

Latina Wilson
Board Chair

cc: Charles County Delegation
Charles County Commissioners
Board Members