



**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-0749: 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 0749 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 0749 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 -0749 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.