

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 be 'Ongisa Ichile-Mckenzie', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ongisa Ichile-Mckenzie
Director, Southern Marylanders for Racial Equality