

## Testimony

The time has come for Baltimore City and its residents to be full participants in the decisions that are made on our behalf. In order for the community to truly have a voice in the education of our failing school system, accountability from the school board must be possible. Right now, neither the school board nor administration can be held to account via the voices of the people.

SB157 contains within it, the foundation to make great strides in educating the youth of Baltimore City. We must begin listening to those affected. We cannot possibly truly serve our youth without first hearing from them. SB157 will allow for student members of the board to participate in all major discussions and votes that do not provide a clear conflict of interest. Our youth are some of the best and brightest in this world and should have and be offered a seat at the decision making tables.

Additionally, school board members should be compensated. In order to hear from all the people of Baltimore spanning a variety of neighborhoods, nationality, and income groups, the position should be accessible to all who wish to do it. A volunteer position this time consuming and mentally taxing is not a realistic possibility for most Baltimoreans. Sacrificing time as working class, modest income Baltimoreans is simply out of the question. It is also troubling that Baltimore is one of only 2 jurisdictions in this state where funds are not offered to its school school-board.

In conclusion, a more democratically-elected board provides the people a chance to govern themselves in the area of education and reduces the likelihood that we continue on a path to failing schools. Let's give the people a chance to speak for themselves at the ballot. Let's move forward with SB157.