



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter  
In Favor of SB 157**

**Before the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
On January 19, 2022**

**Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Esteemed Members of the  
Committee:**

**Senate Bill 157 is a straightforward bill that would improve the composition of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners making it more representative of, and responsive to, the students and the community it serves, by: (1) Increasing the number of student representatives on the Board from one to two, and (2) Creating a task force to study how to best compensate members so the Board can better reflect the demographics of the city it serves.**

**Unlike other school boards across the state that have more than one student representative, Baltimore City public school students are told, implicitly, through policy, that they are less trusted to make decisions on a range of educational issues that directly affect them – that somehow they have greater conflicts of interest than the adults that serve on the Board. This perspective is myopic and can translate into poor educational outcomes, some of which is borne out in the data.**

**This bill would place a second student member on the Board, thus giving the voice of students greater weight in matters involving their education. It would also facilitate peer-to-peer support and skills development in navigating board membership.**

**Senate Bill 157 also seeks to address another issue that affects Board responsiveness to the educational needs of our public school students: Member Compensation.**

**Of the 24 jurisdictions across the state, Baltimore City is only one (1) of two (2) jurisdictions that offers no compensation to its school board members. Our members dedicate, on average, more than 20 hours per week on board matters.**

**Their time commitments include: meeting preparation, hosting community town halls and school-based events, and attending biweekly school board meetings that generally last from three (3) to seven (7) hours. Our school board members are working the equivalent of permanent part-time jobs.**

**This uncompensated time commitment makes it impractical for individuals that need to work multiple jobs to serve, thus limiting the pool to persons with substantial income or that don't need to earn an income.**

**Without compensation, it is nearly impossible for most residents of Baltimore to serve on the school board. Under the current scheme, the voices and perspectives of the wealthy will continue to supersede others and the playing field will remain unlevel.**

**Current Maryland State Department of Education regulations allow for compensating board members. Adding a line item for Board compensation would amount to one tenth of a percent (0.001) of the district's budget or, potentially, hundreds of thousands of dollars less in overtime for the school police force. We must take steps to ensure that any eligible Baltimore City resident is able to serve on the school board without their income serving as a barrier.**

**For these reasons, I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 157. Passage of this bill would bring us one step closer to our collective mission of preparing each student to be successful in this global economy and to be strong contributors to their communities.**

**Respectfully,**

*Jill P. Carter*

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