

**Testimony from Ralikh Hayes, Co-Founder & Deputy Director of Organizing Black  
and Baltimore City resident**

**SB157 - Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners – Alterations**

**Before the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee**

**[1/19 at 1:00 p.m]**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

I address you all today as the Deputy Director of Organizing Black, an organization made up of Black 18-35 year olds working to build a Baltimore where participation in governance at all levels and democratic decision-making is one of the central pillars of our work, and as a lead organizer with a nationally renowned civil rights organization.

More importantly, I come to you all as a lifelong resident of Baltimore City, and as a product of Baltimore City Schools and the decades of organizing in City Schools' to make our school system more equitable, more just, and more humane for students, teachers, staff, and families.

I support SB157 and I urge this body to support it, too. SB157 contains critical language that would right a huge and historic wrong by making the Baltimore City Public School Board democratically-elected as it is in every other county in Maryland. Furthermore, it would ensure compensation for school board members making serving on the school board more equitable and accessible to committed community members who otherwise may not be able to participate. Lastly, SB157 would expand student membership on the school board and allow student-members to vote in all major decisions—a right they do not currently have.

The current mayoral-appointed school board structure has its roots in white politicians and white supremacists political interests stripping democratic autonomy from Black Baltimoreans. SB157 is a step in the right direction to undo the generations of harm this has caused.

Pass SB157. Baltimore children, families and communities deserve to have their voices heard.