



Official Testimony
SB157
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners
Student Members and Task Force to Study Compensation
Position: **FAVORABLE**

Chair Pinsky and Members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee,

My name is Ricarra Jones, and I am the Political Director of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. We are the largest healthcare workers union in the nation – representing 10,000 healthcare workers in long-term care facilities and hospitals across Maryland. Our union supports SB157: Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners Student Members and Task Force to Study Compensation and urge the Committee to issue a favorable report.

Given Baltimore City's current school climate where our children are being arrested, suffering from poverty, falling behind academically, and experiencing other disparities, it is critical to have proper representation on the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners. By passing this legislation, it would allow an additional student member to serve on the Board therefore producing an increase in student transparency, an additional voice to echo the needs of more students, and it will most importantly allow the student vote to make a greater impact. Given the fact that students are also at the whim of the demands and regulations of the school system, this bill allows student members the necessary voting rights and participation ability to fully utilize the interests of the students. This is vital to ensure that the voice of students will not be ostracized or ignored from matters that directly impact students.

Equally as important, by passing this legislation it would allow for a better democratic process of representation. This democratic process where unlike an appointment process, would allow students themselves to vote for their student board member. Simultaneously, in make Baltimore City's School Board more equitable compared to statewide school boards, a commission would be established to analyze and evaluate the value of the Board to make a proper compensation recommendation.

The members of 1199SEIU stand behind this piece of legislation because it allows for a more democratic process to take place which represents the exact values and process, we represent within our membership. In a time when the voices of students are needed now more than ever, particularly due to the vast number of students who have contracted and died from COVID-19, we encourage this Committee to give SB157 a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Ricarra Jones
Political Director

1199SEIU UHE
ricarra.jones@1199.org