

# BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Brandon M. Scott**  
Mayor, City of Baltimore

**Jhonneta A. Richardson**  
Chair, Baltimore City Board  
of School Commissioners

**Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises**  
Chief Executive Officer

**Testimony of the  
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners  
Support with Amendments  
Senate Bill 157 –  
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners – Student Members and Task  
Force to Study Compensation**

**January 19, 2022**

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners supports the concepts within Senate Bill 157, but proposes a few amendments to strengthen the legislation and to strengthen the important position that the student member provides on the Board.

From the Board's understanding, there are 24 school boards in the State. Of the 24 school boards, 7 have student members. Of the 7 student members, 5 have voting rights. Of the 5 student members, one has full voting rights in Anne Arundel County; one has voting rights on all items but personnel matters in Montgomery County; and the remainder have similar restrictions as the current student member on the City School Board.

The City School Board very much wants to continue to promote the student member's ability to make serving on the school board a learning opportunity. The student member, even with the current restrictions in the law, serves on the School Board's Policy Committee and votes on policies that are before the school board. The Policy Committee is one of the most important committees of the Board as it provides the overall direction for the school system and provides guidance to the CEO as she manages the daily activities of the school system.

Currently, the student member is appointed annually by the Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City (ASCBC) Executive Committee. ASCBC oversees student government associations throughout the district. Any school that forms a student government allows for those students at the school to become a member of ASCBC. Currently, there are only 28 active student government associations (SGA) in the district, mostly at the high school level. The Board, prior to the global pandemic was working toward building a more robust SGA and ASCBC. Unfortunately, since 2020, it has been difficult to maintain the strong relationship building among the schools and the SGAs. Prior to the pandemic, there were 40 SGAs in the district and momentum to increase was there. Since the school closures in 2020 and the virtual learning that was conducted, this momentum has waned.

Prior to making any changes to the student member voting rights, attending executive session, the election process or increasing the number from one to two student members, the Board would urge that the Committee allow it to continue to work with ASCBC and the student government associations to build a stronger and more robust interest so that should a citywide election process for the student member need to take place, we will have a larger number of students interested in not only participating in student government, but understand the position of student member and have more students interested in becoming a student member. Building interest would also allow for a broader representation of the student body to participate.

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The Board suggest that the Committee strike all of the new language that increases the student members from one to two and the election and nomination process and instead have language that the Board and ASCBC should develop a plan to have more students engaged in student government and increase active SGAs across the districts This plan could be completed by June 30, 2023.

The Board membership in no way has come to the General Assembly to seek compensation. This year, the City School Board will become a hybrid board, ie. combination of elected and appointed members. With the addition of two elected school board members coming to the City School Board this year, the Board does agree that a compensation study should be conducted. However, the Board would like to amend the legislation in this area, too.

Instead of the Mayor selecting 5 members on the compensation workgroup and no more than 2 of his selections can be board members, The Board would suggest that the Mayor have 5 selections and there must also be an additional 2 school board members chosen by the School Board Chair. This would make the task force comprised of 11 members and ensures that there are two voices that truly understand the demands of the position and the budgetary restrictions facing the school system.

Again, the Board supports this legislation with a few amendments to make the legislation stronger and to provide more opportunity for the Board to work with students to create a larger cohort of students interested in serving in student government and on the school board.

Based upon the foregoing, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners supports, with amendments, Senate Bill 157 and urges a favorable report with these amendments.

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