



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter
In Favor of Senate Bill 157–Baltimore City Board of School
Commissioners - Student Members and Task Force to Study
Compensation and Student Members–
Before the Ways and Means Committee
On March 24, 2022**

**Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, 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.**

**Senate Bill 157 would allow the student member of the board to vote
on matters of importance including capital and operating budgets,
school closings, reopenings and boundaries, and student disciplinary
matters. Allowing student members to make decisions on a range of
educational issues that directly affect them is not only a learning
experience but will ensure that the student voice is not ostracized or
ignored.**

**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. This bill
would establish a taskforce that studies the possibility and effect of
adding a second student member to the board.**

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 talent pool to persons either earning substantial income or enough income to avoid having to work additional jobs.

Without compensation, it is nearly impossible for most city residents to serve on the board. Under the current scheme, the voices and perspectives of the wealthy will continue to dominate and the playing field will remain uneven.

Current regulations promulgated by the Maryland State Department of Education allow for the compensation of board members. Adding a line item for Board compensation would amount to one tenth of one 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 resident of the city has the opportunity to serve on the school board without an income barrier.

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

Respectfully,

Jill P. Carter

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