

Noureen A. Badwi

Former Maryland State Board of Education Student Member (2019-2020)

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice-Chairman Washington, and members of the House Ways and Means committee:

My name is Noureen Badwi, and I am a resident of Towson, Maryland. I urge you all to support HB 192 this legislative session. I currently am in my senior year of college at Georgetown University, work-full time in the political sector, and am the President of the Young Democrats of Maryland. I served on the **Maryland State Board of Education my junior year of high school in 2019-2020, as a student board member with full voting rights.**

In this role, I **voted on a \$7 billion dollar state-wide budget for Maryland's public schools**, making me the only Baltimore County student to ever have a vote on an education budget. I spearheaded health education reforms, represented the student voice as the legislature passed the Kirwan Commission, and I helped lead our state in the beginning months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Everyday, walking the halls of my high school, visiting schools across the state, and talking to students, teachers, and principals, gave me a more unique and holistic view of Maryland public education than was possible for any other board member. Every policy that I voted on at the state board, I not only worked to legislate and craft with my colleagues, but **I was the only member who saw the rubber hit the road.** I knew which programs were working, and which weren't. Instead of being drowned by the noise of outside or powerful interests, I spent my days talking to every-day teachers, students, and principals. The ultimate goal I had was to do my job well. I, just as every other student member, had **no motive either than to fight to improve the education system that my friends, my peers and I had to live and breathe everyday.** This unique, and unbiased perspective, positions student members to be significant assets to their Board of Education, as they work to get as much as they can done within their one-year term.

Further, not only do student members have a unique value-add, but they're more than capable of handling complex issues, especially when those issues are ones related to the education system they've personally been in for over a decade. To be frank, I am pretty sure **I had a harder time with my Calculus homework, or picking out a Prom dress, than I did figuring out how to read an education budget.** By leveraging my first-hand experiences, spending hours researching and studying board materials, talking to constituents and stakeholders, and working strategically, any student member – just as any other adult elected board member – can be an effective legislator of education policy and appropriator of budgetary matters. **Age has nothing to do with how good of a board member or legislator you are – hard work does.**

Our BCPS student members are among our brightest, our most zealous advocates, and strategic thinkers, who sit side-by-side to other board members – and it's time they get an equal vote. **I urge you all to support HB 192.**

In solidarity –

Noureen Badwi

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The views expressed in this letter are my own.