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**Written Testimony from American Federation of Teachers-Maryland
SB 157 – Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners –
Student Members and Taskforce to Study Compensation
Before the House Ways & Means Committee
March 24, 2022
SUPPORT**

Good afternoon, Chair Atterbeary and members of the House Ways and Means Committee.

On behalf of the more than 20,000 members of the American Federation of Teachers – Maryland (AFT Maryland), including the Baltimore Teachers’ Union (BTU), we ask for a favorable report on SB 157, a bill that would give student representatives on the board of commissioners more of a say in how their school system is run, as well as create a commission to study the potential to compensate board members for their time in governing Baltimore City Public Schools.

This bill would bring Baltimore City Public Schools governance structures in line with other school systems across the state by granting the students the authority to vote on all matters before the board. By giving the student body a meaningful, legitimate voice on the board that determines local school system policy, this bill demonstrates to the students of Baltimore City that we value their input, we value their voices, and we value the principle that students should take an active, participatory role in their education.

In addition, this bill will bring the Baltimore City Public School System in line with other local boards in the state by bringing us closer to compensating members for their work. Currently, Baltimore City is one of only two jurisdictions in the state that does not at least partially compensate school board members—Harford County being the other. Board members are expected to attend the weekly board and subcommittee meetings, and to be responsive to parents, staff and community members. Unfortunately, the lack of compensation proves to be a financial barrier for far too many residents who do not have the time or resources to work for free. As a result, the board is too often populated by members who can financially afford to volunteer their time to work for free. Compensating board members will increase the likelihood that there will be a more representative pool of candidates for vacancies on the school board when they arise.

Again, AFT-Maryland calls for a favorable report for SB 157. Thank you.

