

**Testimony from Diamonté Brown, BTU, Baltimore City Resident
HB433- Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners – Alterations**

Before the House Ways & Means Committee

February 10, 2022

Position: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Good afternoon members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Diamonté Brown and I'm a 43rd district resident. I support HB433 which seeks to increase the amount of student members of the Baltimore City Schools Board of Commissioners from one to two, to give those student members full voting rights and the ability to participate in closed/executive sessions, to alter the process by which those students are chosen to be more democratic, and to establish a commission to research and make recommendations of board member compensation.

Baltimore City Public Schools System (BCPSS) continues to work towards increasing the spaces for students to share their voice and give feedback on decisions. BCPSS has worked to increase these spaces by:

- Publicly singling out the 1 student member of the board (SMOB) at school board meetings to ask for their input on issues in lieu of them being able to just vote like the other members of the board
- Hosting youth forums to seek student voice on initiatives, and
- Issuing surveys to students to get feedback

Making sure the SMOB and other students are given space to speak is something we should continue doing but this will not be enough to address what our students have asked for. Our students aren't just asking for more voice and invitations to speak; our students are asking for more decision making power when the decision being made directly impacts them. Many adults are comfortable with giving students space to give their voice but many adults seem to feel discomfort in sharing decision making power with students.

Although there are ways we can improve the bill, like making an amendment that will remove the delegate convention intermediary step of the student member of the board election process, House Bill 433 gives us the opportunity to give our students more decision making power. If House Bill 433 is passed, more students will have decision making power on the school board and the current decision making power that the BCPSS SMOB currently has will be increased.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report with amendments on HB433. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Diamonté Brown
President, BTU, 43rd District
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