

**Testimony from Jocelyn Providence, Baltimore City Schools Teacher, District 45
Resident**

**HB433 - Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners – Student Members and
Task Force to Study Compensation**

Before the Ways and Means Committee

2/10/22

Position: FAVORABLE with amendments

Good morning members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Jocelyn Providence and I'm a District 45 resident. I support HB433 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.

Even in my eighth year of teaching in Baltimore City Public Schools I continue to be motivated and inspired by our students. Our students are some of the most hard working and dedicated individuals I know. They are reflective and constantly re-adjusting to what is going on around them, especially now more than ever. As the people who are learning, growing, and interacting with the systems and policies of Baltimore City Public Schools every day it is only right that they are given equal opportunity and access to full voting rights in the decision-making process. I have also had the pleasure of supporting a previous Student Commissioner of the Baltimore City School Board and she expressed to me how helpful and supportive it would have been to have more than one student member on the Board. She informed me that it would allow for more collaboration and student perspectives to be shared in discussions and conversations. Anyone who has had a conversation with young people know that they are great at generating ideas and solutions when they have another young person around.

This would change the burden of one student representing nearly 80,000 students. We need to empower our students and support student leadership and growth. I know there are efforts to increase the participation in ASCBC across the district which is great, but that is only representation from about 10 schools. Every 6-12th grade student deserves the right to vote for who they want to represent them as student commissioner to the Board. This is how we engage and grow strong and active members of our community.

Finally, if we want to have equitable access to the role of Commissioner to the Baltimore City School Board we must establish a commission to research and make recommendations of Board member compensation. We cannot limit the amazing pool of potential candidates to serve on the School Board to people who have the financial ability to take on this role without compensation. The commitment and work done by School Board Commissioners is demanding and honorable and they deserve to be compensated as such. City Schools has a 1.2 billion dollar budget. While we don't know what the compensation commission will recommend, even with an expanded Board and above state average compensation this would only cost the district approximately \$200,000 or 0.0002% of their total budget.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB433.
Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jocelyn Providence
Baltimore City Schools Teacher and District 45 Resident
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