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Legislative District 41
Baltimore City

Health and Government Operations
Committee

Chair

Health Occupations and
Long-Term Care Subcommittee

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Joint Committee on Administrative,
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Testimony of Delegate Samuel I. Rosenberg

Before the House Appropriations Committee

in Support of House Bill 798

Baltimore City - Public School Facility - Modifying, Use, and Closing

Mister Chairman and Members of the Committee:

In a letter to the Baltimore City Delegation in February 2017, the city government pledged its commitment to community engagement on the reuse of surplus city school buildings:

Community engagement is a critical component of the redevelopment process, not only to gather community input on reuse but also to get buy-in for an eventual reuse or redevelopment plan . . . Engagement is beneficial in both helping neighborhood residents come to terms with the closure of school programs as well as moving beyond the closure to help determine a reuse that positively impacts the neighborhood.

In District 41, and perhaps elsewhere in Baltimore, however, the City has fallen short of its commitment to work with residents to identify constructive new uses for shuttered schools. In the neighborhoods around Grove Park Elementary School and West Baltimore Middle School, for example, residents continue to mourn the loss of their schools and community gathering places and are unhappy about the future uses that have been identified thus far. They feel unheard and ignored.

To ensure that other Baltimore neighborhoods avoid this fate, HB 798 would require the city government to do what it promised in 2017, by requiring it to undertake a community engagement process to obtain neighborhood input on the future use of any surplus city school buildings and land.

In the weeks preceding this hearing, I have had regular discussions with the City staff about the nature of the desired community engagement, and I have agreed to the amendments I am offering today.

I urge the committee to give HB 798 a favorable report.

March 7, 2023