



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter

**In Favor of SB849 -Baltimore City –
Modifying or Closing Public School Facility**

Before the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

on March 1, 2023

**Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Members of the
Committee:**

- **SB0849 would put the power to protect Baltimore school grounds in the hands of the community leadership most connected to those schools. Currently, Baltimore City communities are forced to watch as their schools are sold off to non-Maryland business owners. This bill would correct that injustice.**
- **In 2019, hundreds of elementary school students were uprooted from their desks at Grove Park Elementary-Middle School, leaving the school vacant. The voices of the community were not heard when they endorsed an offer for a financial literacy and economic development elementary school. But the DHCD sided with**

CommuniCare, an Ohio based company, which intends to transform the school into a nursing facility.

- **This bill would allow the citizens to have input in decisions regarding what will be done with re-purposed public schools. It empowers local communities to have a say by forming a community task force. The task force will examine and make recommendations concerning any future use of public schools and the land where the schools sit. It will ensure that the voices that matter the most, the community, will be heard.**
- **The community around Grove Park was not heard when it lost its elementary/middle school. This bill will prevent that from happening again. The current system leaves the political power in the hands of people far detached from the communities affected by their decisions. It leads to an injustice for the people of Baltimore City and further disenfranchises them.**
- **In a letter dated February 8, 2017, from the Baltimore City Department of Planning to the Baltimore City Delegation of the General Assembly, the City indicated that it would engage the community in future school closings in the manner this bill would dictate. That, however, never occurred. Accordingly, this bill is needed to have the City do what it promised this body in 2017.**

- **Three (3) more schools are set to close this year in Baltimore City. The community would like (and should) have input on what happens in their community. The Community Task Force that this bill would create will provide that opportunity.**

For these reasons, I request a favorable report on SB849.

Sincerely,



Jill P. Carter, Esq.