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Testimony from Youth As Resources (YAR)

HB 153- Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners – Alterations Before the Education,

House Ways and Means Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Good morning members of the House Ways and Means Committee

We are Tori Grace, (Chair, Board of Directors), Kyliah White (Vice-Chair, Board of Directors), Ma'ryah Bayard (Secretary, Board of Directors) and Christopher Givens (Treasurer, Board of Directors) and we represent Youth As Resources. We are writing to give our full support of HB 153 to give student members of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners expanded voting rights, 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 on board member compensation and adding a second student member of the board.

We do not always believe that the current board members understand our needs. Our experience has been that the current board does not listen to us the way we need them to. Positioning students as real decision makers who could encourage the adult members to listen to us would be helpful. Students should be a significant part of decision making around the issues that impact us.

We would like to emphasize as an organizational member of the VOTES (**Voices Towards and Elected School Board**) Coalition, this bill is already a significant compromise. We met with members of the school board and the mayor's office over multiple years in good faith discussions after pulling the bill two sessions ago that would have more dramatically restructured the school board. Their concerns and ideas were incorporated into this legislation to ensure that we can move towards a more democratic, transparent, youth inclusive and effective board.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 153. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Youth As Resources

Tori Grace
Chair, Board of Directors
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