

Testimony in SUPPORT of

House Bill 200: Community Schools- Alterations
Appropriations and Ways & Means Committees

Position: Favorable With Amendments
January 30, 2024

My name is Shakeemah White and I work in a Community School in Prince George's County Public School. While I love working with children, families, and the community to promote equitable, safe, and conducive learning environments while providing resource linkage. My experience working with the Office of Community Schools in Prince Georges' County Public Schools has been disheartening to say the least and has caused me a great deal of anxiety about the disconnect between policy and practice, which is a disservice to the communities that we *proclaim* to serve.

I am in support of House Bill 200, with the following amendments:

- Community Schools Coordinators should not be supervised by a principal. CSCs should be supervised by an employee within the Office of Community Schools. Due to the hierarchical structure, it is virtually impossible to implement "a menu of needs-driven, high-quality programs and services in adherence with the community school model" in an inclusively collaborative manner with someone who holds final approving authority. It is antithetical to enacting change when and if the principal as the evaluating supervisor of the CSC is against inclusive leadership with any entity, has no and/or low academic expectations for the students and blatantly detests the community. Principals have unbridled authority over the implementation of the community school model in their school, the allocation and expenditure of funding, and the delegation of duties for everyone that they supervise. CSCs are tasked with fulfilling roles that they do not possess the acumen, accreditation, and or training for. As a result of a multitude of reasons but chiefly, the current shortage of teachers and other school-based staff. For this reason, the bill must include language that speaks directly to best practices and the inclusivity of leadership.
- Maryland State Department of Education should enact greater oversight for PGCPSC Community Schools to ensure adherence with the model in every school. There is a massive disconnect between what is written in policy and in the Institute for Educational Leadership "Blueprint for Community Schools" versus what is practiced and directed by Prince Georges' County Public School, Office of Community Schools. Principals are not working in concert with CSCs to implement and maintain a full-service Community School and therefore they must be mandated to do so by an entity that possess the power to ensure fidelity to the model.
- Schools should not have flexibility in the use of funds from the Concentration of Poverty grant funding for any reason, *if* there is not direct oversight specifically by the Maryland State Department of Education, on the allocation and expenditure of funding.

Unfortunately, I have witnessed and spoken out against the mismanagement of funds by principals due to limited oversight, no real system of checks and balances, the unbridled authority given to principals regarding the implementation of the community school model in their schools to include the allocation of funds, and principals as the quint essential “street-level bureaucrats”.

These are some of the reasons why I am in support with HB 200 with the above-mentioned amendments.

Thank you,

Shakeemah White, MPA