



Testimony for the House Ways and Means Committee

Tuesday, January 23rd, 2024

HB 151 - Charles County Board of Education - Vacancy Procedures - Timing and Video Streaming and Archiving

Position: Favorable

Hello Chair Atterberry, Vice-Chair Wilkens, and committee members,

I write to urge your support for Del. Patterson's legislation, HB 151. As a Charles County parent leader, I believe that this bill, to mandate the Charles County Board of Education work expeditiously to appoint a replacement in the event a vacancy occurs, would greatly help in ensuring that all residents are given equal representation and that parent voices are reflected at the decision making table.

On February 9, 2023, the Board of Education of Charles County announced the resignation of Board Member Cindy Coulby. Our community and parent leaders advocated for this position to be filled for months. Parents were deeply concerned that without full representation policy would negatively impact the quality of education District 1 children, and our whole district, would receive. It is vital to have equitable representation for each district so we can ensure all voices are considered when making decisions. We urged our Board to prioritize filling this vacancy so that District 1 families and educators would have full representation yet our 2023 Chair and Vice Chair didn't see this as a priority. The Board of Education of Charles County on October 24 selected Samichie Thomas to fill the vacant District 1 seat. Thomas was finally chosen after the Board conducted a search for applicants from District 1 interested in serving as a Board member due to public advocacy from parents signing petitions, reaching out to other board members, and the community speaking at school board meetings. We shouldn't have to do that to ensure all Charles County Public School families have equal representation.

Again, I urge the committee to support HB 151 to ensure the interests of families in every district are reflected in budget decisions, policy development, and to ensure that community voices are heard when important decisions are being made. Let's make sure we show families and communities that when there is a vacancy on the county board we prioritize filling it to ensure they are properly represented.

Gracias,
Pascale Small,
Charles County Parent Leader
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