

**Testimony from T. Nathan Ferrell, American Federation of Teachers Maryland -
Vice President, District 40 Resident
SB554 - Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners – Appointment Process -
Alterations**

Before the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

3/11/26

Position: UNFAVORABLE

Good afternoon members of the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

My name is Nathan Ferrell, I'm a District 40 resident and a Vice President of the Maryland State Federation of the American Federation of Teachers.

I am also a Baltimore City Public School Teacher and proud member of the Baltimore Teachers Union.

I'm writing to urge this committee to hold no vote or issue an unfavorable report on SB554, which would alter the Baltimore City School Board appointment process by eliminating the community panel.

This legislation is bad for Baltimore City Public School students, families, workers and the community at large. This legislation eliminates the one opportunity for stakeholder input and educational experts to exercise local democratic control over the appointment of school board members.

Baltimore City continues to be the least democratic jurisdiction in Maryland for school boards and we continue to have the vast majority of our commissioners as unelected/appointed. Despite adding two elected seats out of 11 total. The 19 other Maryland jurisdictions have fully elected boards, and the other four hybrid boards all have a majority of their seats elected.

The community panel that this bill seeks to eliminate allows content area experts in education and the impacted staff, students, and families to ensure that candidates for the school board possess the necessary skills and qualifications to serve our students.

The community panel also includes special education law expertise. This is to ensure that qualified school board members are appointed by the state to avoid lawsuits stemming from City Schools being rightfully sued.

The community panel convenings and interviews are subject to the Open Meetings Act and are accessible to the public. The result of these meetings is to recommend to the Mayor a shortlist of qualified candidates.

This legislation to remove the community panel is a step backwards and removes the final tiny bit of local control Baltimore City has over its own school system.

This legislation is an insult to the hardworking people of Baltimore City Public Schools. None of the representative organizations on this community panel were consulted prior to the bill's crafting. The Baltimore City Senate Delegation were not even notified that it was being heard in the City's Senate delegation to speak against it. The lack of transparency and democracy in the bill's process alone should be disqualifying.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to hold no vote or issue an unfavorable report on SB554. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Nathan Ferrell

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