

Good afternoon, Members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

My name is Isaiah Gregory. I serve as President of the Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City and as a constituent of the 40th District.

I recognize the responsibility this Committee carries in shaping education policy. The structure of governance decisions affects not only students, but also educators, staff, families, and the broader Baltimore community.

During the February 27th session, it was stated that SB 554 does not prohibit the Mayor from seeking guidance or input from community bodies.

Respectfully, the concern is not whether consultation is allowed. It is whether participation is guaranteed.

There is a meaningful distinction between voices that may be considered and voices that are structurally embedded into the process.

The current Community Panel ensures that educators, labor representatives, civil rights organizations, parents, and student leadership have a formal role in screening nominees before appointments are made. SB 554 removes that mechanism and shifts stakeholder engagement from institutional design to executive discretion.

In Baltimore City, there has been an ongoing dialogue among students, educators, and labor partners about the importance of moving from symbolic engagement to structural inclusion. Many stakeholders have expressed that being heard in conversation is not the same as being embedded in governance.

When structured mechanisms are removed, it can reinforce the perception that stakeholder voice is secondary rather than foundational.

Students, teachers, and staff are not peripheral actors in this system. We are directly impacted by board decisions in resource allocation, working conditions, discipline policy, and educational opportunity.

If governance reform is the objective, then it is worth asking whether removing a formalized community mechanism strengthens transparency, or risks weakening durable trust.

Stakeholders are not asking for a courtesy consultation. They are asking for structural inclusion.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge careful reconsideration of SB 554 as written or amendments that preserve guaranteed stakeholder participation.