

**BaltimoreCounty\_FAV\_HB0192.pdf**

Uploaded by: Joel Beller

Position: FAV



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.  
*County Executive*

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*Acting Director of Government Affairs*

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*Associate Director of Government Affairs*

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*Associate Director of Government Affairs*

**BILL NO.:**           **House Bill 192**

**TITLE:**                Baltimore County Board of Education – Student Member –  
Voting

**SPONSOR:**           Baltimore County Delegation

**COMMITTEE:**        Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**POSITION:**          **SUPPORT**

**DATE:**                March 23, 2022

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** HB 192 – Baltimore County Board of Education – Student Member – Voting. This legislation would authorize the student member of the Baltimore County Board of Education to vote on capital and operating budget matters.

As a former student member and the parent of a BCPS student, County Executive Olszewski knows the critical insight student members provide as the representative most impacted by decisions made by the Board. Student members understand how young residents live their day-to-day lives and see first hand the impacts administrative policy have on their education. These students are selected by their peers because they have proven to be capable of understanding a wide range of complex issues and possess the leadership qualities to address them head-on.

Today’s students are more engaged and informed than ever before. Young people are leading the way in civil advocacy and business innovation. Student members have a proven track record of exhibiting prudence and responsibility in budgetary, contractual, and system-wide matters. These dedicated civil servants deserve to have their voices empowered on issues that will undeniably have a direct effect on their educational experience moving forward.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 192. For more information, please contact Joel Beller, Acting Director of Government Affairs at [jbeller@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:jbeller@baltimorecountymd.gov).

# **Unfavorable HB 192.pdf**

Uploaded by: Amy Adams

Position: UNF

March 21, 2022

To: The Members of the Maryland Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee,

We think it is important for you to have some context and insight into the Baltimore County Public School Student Member of the Board of Education (SMOB) selection process in order to make a truly informed decision on how to vote for HB 192-Baltimore County Board of Education-Student Member Voting Rights and Training.

We appreciate that you do not know the intricate details of all 24 public school systems in the state of Maryland.

From 2016 to 2019, the SMOB was elected by a special Baltimore County Student Council (BCSC) convention open to student leaders. Before 2016, a committee of BCPS staff and students convened to choose the SMOB. Starting in 2019, BCPS changed the selection process to a student election for 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students.

- First year of student election 2020: 8,072 students cast votes
- Second year of student election 2021: 2,914 students cast votes out of 59,000+ MS and HS students, 5% participation rate
- Third year of student election 2022: 13,000 students cast votes out of 58,000+ MS and HS students. 22% participation rate. Much improved but hardly a majority or quorum.

In the 2022 election, students use their Google login account to cast a vote on a google form and identify if they are in grade 6-8 or 9-12. The flaw in this method of vote collection is that any BCPS student with a Google account had access to the form and could have voted, even if they were younger than 6-12<sup>th</sup> grades. Also, any adult staff member with a Google account had access and were able to vote if they so desired. What is unknown at this time is if BCPS is monitoring the voter process to verify only students in grades 6-12 votes are counted.

Multiple former SMOB candidates and SMOB representatives have commented that while the process to elect the SMOB is improving, there is still work to be done to make it a completely stable and reliable process.

The primary role of the SMOB is to expose the student body to a governing body for a potential career path and to provide student feedback on board issues.

[SMOB Position Description.pdf \(sharpschool.com\)](#)

#### Reasons Against increasing SMOB rights with HB 192:

- **Age**-People under the age of 18 do not have the right to vote. Also, with advanced age comes life experience that provides more multifaceted insight and wisdom when making decisions.
- **Representation**-the majority of secondary students do not vote in the SMOB election, it is not widely advertised at all schools in the same manner. See the data points above.
- **Influence**-children look up to adults, especially adults in position of power. With experience and maturity, an individual is more likely to be resistant to the influence of others. It is a conflict of interest to have the SMOB vote on issues that directly impact his/her teachers or advisors that the student relies on for grades, letters of recommendation or career experiences.
- **Length of service**-SMOB only serves on the BOE for 1 year and is also a full-time student. Learning the details of a complicated \$2+ billion budget often takes more than 1 full year to completely understand. If you have never listened to a BCPS BOE Budget Committee meeting, I

would recommend it. It is very detailed and complex and no one, regardless of age, would be able to master an understanding in 1 year in order to make a knowledgeable vote regarding a \$2 Billion budget.

We agree that students who are motivated to run for the position of SMOB are highly intelligent and driven individuals.

We agree that the student voice is very important.

We would also like to note that the BCPS Board of Education at their December 21, 2021, meeting voted NOT to include increased SMOB voting rights to the Legislative Priorities 2022. Three of the twelve members were in favor of adding SMOB voting rights to the Legislative Priorities of 2022. We ask you to respect the decision made by the majority of the BCPS Board of Education members.

HB 192 did not receive a unanimous favorable vote from the Baltimore County Delegation despite the sponsorship listed now as such rather than from Delegate Ebersole who originally sponsored the bill.

We appreciate you taking the time to read our comments and are available for further discussion. We encourage you to vote UNFAVORABLE on HB 192 at this time.

Sincerely,  
Amy Adams & Mary A. Taylor

openbcps@gmail.com



**HB 0192.pdf**

Uploaded by: Katie Kimball

Position: UNF

HB 192

I am writing to oppose HB 192 and I respectfully request you vote AGAINST this bill, which would increase voting abilities of the young and impressionable student member of the board (SMOB).

My children attend BCPS, and I am firmly against increasing the SMOB voting abilities to include items which would be a direct conflict of interest for a student, as well as not appropriate for a minor to weigh in on, such as budget items. People under the age of 18 do not have the right to vote. Also, with advanced age comes life experience that provides more multifaceted insight and wisdom when making decisions that the SMOB does not have.

SMOB only serves on the BOE for 1 year and is also a full-time student. Learning the details of a complicated \$2+ billion budget often takes more than 1 full year to completely understand. If you have never listened to a BCPS BOE Budget Committee meeting, I would recommend it. It is very detailed and complex and no one, regardless of age, would be able to master an understanding in 1 year in order to make a knowledgeable vote regarding a \$2 Billion budget.

A child's vote can be easily manipulated. Children look up to adults, especially adults in positions of power. Without experience and maturity, an individual is more likely to be influenced by others. It is a conflict of interest to have the SMOB vote on issues that directly impact his/her teachers or advisors that the student relies on for grades, letters of recommendation or career experiences.

The BCPS BOE Legislative and Gov. Relations Committee already voted against this, in addition when it was raised at a BCPS BOE meeting, it was voted down, with only 3 out of 12 members voting for it.

I strongly request for you to oppose this bill.

Thank you for your time

Katie Kimball  
District 7  
Baltimore County

# Written Testimony HB192.pdf

Uploaded by: Laura Hartman

Position: UNF



## Written Testimony- Against HB 192

I am a life time resident of Baltimore County and a graduate of BCPS. I one-hundred percent oppose HB 192. I ask you to vote unfavorably to this bill.

Student Member of the Board (SMOB) do not have the legal capacity to vote in an election. They are not considered adults per the law and should not have the right to vote here either.

SMOB's are typically elected by a very small percentage of the Middle and High School population. They are not a representative of the entire student population.

No 15–18-year-old should have the authority to make decisions on a \$2+ billion budget. They are not equipped to handle decisions of this magnitude.

Students only serve for a one-year term and they does not give them enough time to learn all of the parts and pieces to such a large budget.

It is a conflict of interest to allow a student to be able to vote on decisions that directly impact him/her and their teachers.

I implore you to vote unfavorable to this bill.

# **HB 192 Unfavorable.pdf**

Uploaded by: Meghan Hughes

Position: UNF

Hello, my name is Meghan Hughes and I am writing as a parent of 3 children in BCPS. I respectfully ask that you vote NO to the HB 192 SMOB voting rights legislation. We are a military family that has moved to many different areas of the country and have been a part of many school districts. Notably the last two school districts were Cornwall Central School District in NY and Fairfax County Public Schools in VA. CCSD had no student representative on their Board of Education at all and FCPS had a student representative with no voting rights at all (I believe this is true of all counties in VA, but can't say with absolute certainty). The BCPS SMOB has voting rights, except when it comes to the \$2 billion budget of BCPS. The SMOB is able to give input but not vote on that one area.

The budget for BCPS is 51% of the entire county's budget. The taxpayers of Baltimore County do not get to elect the SMOB, but it is students from grades 6-12 in BCPS that vote for the SMOB. In last year's elections, only 5% of all eligible students voted for the SMOB. I personally had two middle school students at the time and for two weeks I asked if they received information about the vote. They had not and would have never voted had it not been for me sharing the information on how to vote with them. Why were some students made aware of the vote and others were not made aware of the vote?

It does come down to maturity and experience. I am sure that any student that has served as a SMOB is a diligent student that is typically more mature than their peers. However, they don't have the life experience to make these large budgetary decisions. Honestly I wish every board member had some type of business background where they had to make and be accountable for a budget. Anyone that has run a small business understands the need for fiscal responsibility and the repercussions of poor decision making. However, all members of the board have at least had to run their household budgets for many years and several have children either in BCPS or graduated from BCPS. They have a vested interest in doing what is best all around for these children in BCPS who are our future.

Let me leave my comments with this sentiment. I have a high school daughter that believes she knows everything...I also believed I knew everything in high school. But then I grew up and realized how much I didn't know and that continues to be the case...the more I know the more I realize I don't know. That humbleness that comes with maturity through life experience is what leads to wise decisions. I let my children make some decisions, but not all decisions. If it was up to them they would eat dessert first for every meal and not leave room for the healthy nutritious food that will help their body grow. If it were up to them they would go to bed at 11:30 pm and wake up miserable and tired the next day. If it were up to them, they would spend a large majority of their time on a screen instead of going outside or playing with friends. Adults do know better because we've made many of the bad decisions and suffered the consequences in our young adult life. I do allow my children to make bad decisions at times (nothing serious) such as choosing to not wear a coat when it's cold outside because sometimes the consequence is a great life lesson. However, I do not think that is the same thing for a budget that is over half of the entire county's budget.

**Goetze, Timothy UNFAVORABLE HB192.pdf**

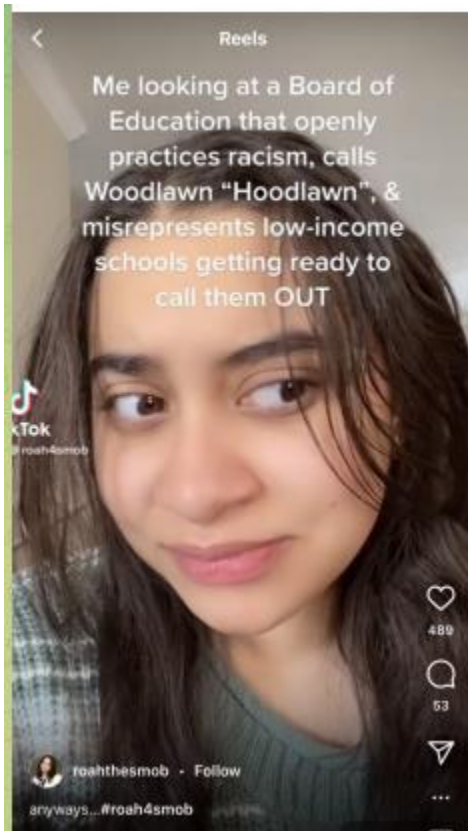
Uploaded by: Timothy Goetze

Position: UNF

My name is Timothy Goetze and I employ you to vote UNFAVORABLY to HB192 which expands the voting rights of the Baltimore County Student Member of the Board (SMOB) of Education.

First point, as a Baltimore County tax payers, we have zero control over who is elected as SMOB. Baltimore County Public School administrative staff provides oversight over a selection process implemented by the Baltimore County Student Council and yet this bill enables the SMOB to vote on an approximately \$2,000,000,000 budget that they do not pay into. The tax payers of Baltimore County have ZERO control over holding the SMOB accountable for their vote.

Second point, the maturity level of the recent SMOBs of Baltimore County does not remotely come close to allowing them the privilege of expanded voting rights. The current SMOB, Christian Thomas, is prone to verbal and emotional outbursts during regular board of education meetings. Mr. Thomas also tends to ask questions that are out of order and is only pursuing the expansion of the SMOB voting rights to enable his own selfish career. The recent election of Roah Hassan indicates that immaturity is the status quo for elected SMOBs as below is a screen shot from her social media account that was posted during her campaign period:



This claim is completely unacceptable and not supported by any facts and yet this is the person that you grant expanded voting rights to. If anything, the SMOB voting privileges should be suspended based on this conduct.

Third point, SMOB voting rights falls under the purview of the Board of Education and what the board determines as appropriate for the student representative. HB192 was voted down by the BOE as a legislative priority at the 21 Dec 21 meeting. This point alone should cause an UNFAVORABLE vote on your part.

Final point, the SMOB only serves on the board for ONE year and has zero frame of reference on continued budget matters nor the knowledge behind budgetary actions. Legislation is currently underway to modify the election process for board nominees to prevent a 100% turnover in a given election year between appointed and elected representatives and yet HB192 is calling for the expansion of the SMOB voting rights to include budget votes when this member is only on the board for a single year. Even though the bill calls for the creation of budget curriculum for the SMOB to take prior to voting on budget matters, this does not and will not replace the lack of any real adult experience with managing a budget, let alone the \$2,000,000,000 budget in BCPS.

Please do Baltimore County tax payer and Baltimore County Public Schools a favor and vote UNFAVORABLY to HB192.