

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.