



LETTER OF *SUPPORT* FOR HOUSE BILL 433

RE: HB433 - Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners - Student Members and Task Force to Study Compensation
FEBRUARY 10, 2022
BEFORE THE HOUSE **WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE**

POSITION: FAVORABLE

My name is Dave Heilker, and I'm a resident of Remington in District 43.

I am writing today **to express support for HB433** which will increase the amount of student members of the Baltimore City Schools Board of Commissioners from one to two, will grant those student members **full voting rights** and **the ability to participate in closed/executive sessions**, to alter the process by which those students are chosen to be more democratic, and to establish a commission to research and make recommendations pertaining to board member compensation.

Each of you here today was **elected to office or you have an election forthcoming in June** of this year.

Each of you should concur, *regardless of party*, that the **system by which we politically engage with our people is damaged**. And while that system is not broken beyond repair, it is fractured.

When canvassing for **many of the people who are current senators and delegates**, as well as during outreach canvassing for issues including the **Education Lockbox**, the **Fair Election Fund**, and the **Blueprint for Maryland's Future** one of the consistent refrains I hear from folks is that we need to **"find more ways for young people to engage in civics + politics in schools."**

I couldn't agree more. Too often on school boards, as they are currently configured, we see tokenization of students, which is compounded by removing most of a young person's autonomy during the time when they are within the school walls.

Schools can be undemocratic and authoritarian places for students. "*In loco parentis*" is the legal terminology for teachers and administrators in schools, and it literally means "in the place of a parent," affording everyone in a school **additional rights except for students – the intended beneficiaries of this educational process**.

With that in mind, I can see no more authentic, money-where-our-mouths-are way to ensure that students become and stay engaged in the political process than **by reinforcing their school careers with additional Democracy**. If we want students to believe that they live a life of self-determination, and that they will inherit a world where their perspective is not only valued, but **that it is also necessary**, the Committee has no choice but to issue a favorable report on HB 433.

I urge you to nurture our Democracy in one of the most meaningful ways there is: through Education.

With the unyielding fury of a thousand hurricanes,

DAVE HEILKER • DISTRICT 43
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