

## **Testimony from BCPSS Teacher & Baltimore City Resident Franca Muller Paz**

### **HB153 - Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners – Student Members and Task Force to Study Compensation and Student Members**

**1/27/2023**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

Good afternoon members of the **House Ways and Means Committee**,

My name is Franca Muller Paz, I am a teacher of 13 years & educator in Baltimore City for the last 10. I'm a Baltimore City resident of the 45th district. I'm writing to give my full support of HB153 to give student members of the board expanded voting rights.

As an advisor for the high school student organization SOMOS - Students Organizing a Multicultural & Open Society, who have fought and one access for ESOL students to our highly selective high schools, expanded internet for over 1M people (as noted by the New York Times), and met with Kamala Harris I want to share what some SOMOS members had to say:

#### **Liernelis BCPSS 12th grader & SOMOS Member:**

"A student member of the board would be able to expose the mental health perspective of what a student faces, the academic struggles and how the methods of teaching affect us as students. Student board members will also be able to collect information from actual students and receive direct feedback from decisions made from a higher level. The school board members haven't been in highschool for who knows how long."

Also, in response to Senator Ron Watson, who was concerned about students having too much on their plate. Liernelis, watching on youtube wanted to share the following: "I understand that students already have a lot on their plate but because of those same reasons is why a students board member is needed so that they can advocate on how some of these decisions directly affect students"

#### **Samreen SOMOS Graduate and 1st Year Student at Johns Hopkins also watching wanted to respond:**

"this is the time to give students a platform to open up and give their input in a system that directly impacts the rest of their lives. This is the foundational training and they need to have a say in it."

#### **Corina BCPSS 11th grader & SOMOS Member:**

A student member can offer a perspective on current school events that may actually be helpful when deliberating on important decisions.

#### **Cheyene, 12th grader & SOMOS Member:**

"I just feel like a student is able to give first hand perspective, that a teacher/staff might not be able to see. it's good to include all perspectives"

**Maggie, 12th grader & SOMOS member:**

“Students understand what they need and some adults don’t acknowledge and/or even understand that. student perspectives would add a voice for all students so that our education can be a lot more enjoyable. As high school students, if we are expected to make decisions for our future, why can’t we have a say in our current education?”

It is the students that see the conditions of their cafeterias, the classrooms. They are the ones who must learn in extreme heat or cold. They see how decisions to execute system wide programs excel or fall short. They are the ones who have to play on the district’s fields, or be denied because of their conditions. Students understand what is urgent, because they live that reality every day.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Baltimore City Delegation to issue a favorable report on HB153. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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