

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Bernard C. “Jack” Young
Mayor, City of Baltimore

Linda Chinnia
*Chair, Baltimore City Board of
School Commissioners*

Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises
Chief Executive Officer

September 4, 2020

The Honorable Brandon Scott
President, Baltimore City Council
City Hall, Room 400
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Re: City Council Bill 20-0199R

Dear Council President Scott:

On February 24, 2020, the Baltimore City Council introduced the above-captioned bill, requesting that Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) and various city agencies update the Council on services provided to and the general well-being of the transgender community in Baltimore.

City Schools’ Policy JBB and Administrative Regulation JBB-RA (Sex-Based Discrimination – Students) were adopted by the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners (Board) in April 2019. Policy JBB confirms that City Schools’ prohibition against sex-based discrimination includes discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and nonconformance to stereotypical notions of masculinity or femininity. As such, the policy and administrative regulation apply to transgender students.

Policy JBB covers key topics, including:

- Use of pronouns
- Dress codes
- Access to gender-segregated facilities
- Athletics and physical education
- Student records

On August 25, 2020, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners reviewed a presentation regarding City Schools’ efforts to ensure robust compliance with Policy JBB and other legal requirements, while also mitigating complaints over the long-run by building capacity to implement supportive practices that will contribute to safe and secure environments for all those we serve in the LGBTQ+ community, including transgender students. The PowerPoint presentation is attached for your convenience, and it also is available at this link:

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[https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/bcpss/Board.nsf/files/BSMUHV7C30B1/\\$file/Presentation%20-%20Supporting%20LGBTQ%2B%20Community-%20FINAL.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/bcpss/Board.nsf/files/BSMUHV7C30B1/$file/Presentation%20-%20Supporting%20LGBTQ%2B%20Community-%20FINAL.pdf)

As detailed in the presentation, City Schools is establishing a cross-functional team of district-office and school-based staff (co-facilitated by the Office of Legal Counsel and Office of Equity), which will:

- Build out key work streams for the 2020-2021 school year and beyond.
- Develop survey to gather quantitative/qualitative data about student and staff experiences and identifying any perceived misinterpretations of Policy JBB.
- Create opportunities for LGBTQ+ students to inform & shape strategies to facilitate interactions where they are welcomed and engaged as authentic thought partners.
- Incorporate input from staff, community advocates, and other stakeholders

Also detailed in the presentation are City Schools’ plans to organize efforts across offices and schools into key work streams:

- Policy Interpretation and Implementation
- Student Engagement, Support, and Wholeness
- Staff Professional Development
- Academics
- Data Management, Monitoring, and Communication
- Facilities

One example of our work is particularly relevant as we seek to ensure safe environments for all our students as City Schools begins the school year with virtual instruction given the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. City Schools has received questions and concerns regarding Zoom, Google Classroom, and other virtual learning platforms displaying the given name of students who do not use their given name for reasons related to gender identity. To address these questions and concerns, City Schools issued guidance to school leaders last spring, which was updated for the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. The updated guidance, which is attached for your convenience, affirms the commitment set forth in Policy JBB that students have a right to be referred to by their preferred name and by the pronouns that correspond with their gender identity. Under Policy JBB, schools are required to allow any and all transgender, agender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming students to use their chosen name and gender pronouns that reflect their identity, regardless of whether they have undergone a legal name change process. The attached guidance provides protocols for schools to follow in responding to students’ requests to update their student information to align with their gender identity.

Another example of our work is in the area of facilities, where City Schools added gender

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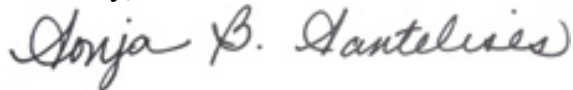
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neutral facilities to City Schools' updated Educational Specifications for school construction and renovation projects, based on a student-focused design developed by and in-house cross-office focus group. City Schools has added gender-neutral facilities in six operating 21st Century schools, nine schools under construction, and four schools in design, plus two additional projects completed in 2019-20 (Graceland Elementary and Holabird Academy).

In conclusion, City Schools has demonstrated a firm public commitment to supporting the safety and well-being of our transgender student population. The district will be pleased to testify upon request.

Thank you for including City Schools in this important process, and for the City Council's longstanding support and advocacy on behalf of our schools and students.

Sincerely,



Sonja Brookins Santelises, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer

C: Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners