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**BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL
EDUCATION, WORKFORCE, AND YOUTH
COMMITTEE**

Mission Statement

The Committee on Education, Workforce and Youth (EWY) is responsible for creating opportunities for our young people, ensuring economic opportunity and prosperity for Baltimore's workforce, and supporting our most vulnerable neighbors. The committee's areas of jurisdiction include public education, labor relations, workforce development, employment, public parks, recreation, and youth affairs. Issue areas include, but are not limited to: education, including adult education, higher education, workforce development, labor, senior affairs, veterans, childcare, accessibility and disability issues, recreation and parks, and historical landmarks.

**The Honorable Robert Stokes, Sr.
Chairman**

PUBLIC HEARING

**THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 2021
5:00 PM**

VIRTUAL WEBEX MEETING

TO BE TELEVISED ON CABLE TV 25

Council Resolution #21-0035R

**Informational Hearing – “Passing Through” Baltimore City Public
School Students**

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEES

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John Bullock – Vice Chair
Mark Conway
Ryan Dorsey
Antonio Glover
Odette Ramos
Robert Stokes
Staff: Jennifer Coates

WAYS AND MEANS (W&M)

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Kristerfer Burnett
Ryan Dorsey
Danielle McCray
Sharon Green Middleton
Isaac “Yitzy” Schleifer
Robert Stokes
Staff: Marguerite Currin

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Staff: Marguerite Currin

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Phylicia Porter
James Torrence
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Eric Costello
Sharon Green Middleton
Odette Ramos
James Torrence
Staff: Richard Krummerich



BILL SYNOPSIS

Committee: Education, Workforce, and Youth

Resolution: 21-0035R

Informational Hearing – “Passing Through” Baltimore City Public School Students

Purpose:

For the purpose of urging the Baltimore City Public School System’s CEO to explain to the City Council why students are being promoted or “passed through” to higher grade levels when the students are academically unprepared to move beyond their current grade level.

Agencies/Organizations Reporting

Baltimore City Public School System

Background

A west Baltimore high school (*Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts*) under investigation for grading irregularities appears to have failed students and still promoted them through course levels. *See attached Press Release*

On April 8, 2021, a representative(s) from the Baltimore City Public School System will appear before the Committee to answer questions pertaining to why students are being promoted or passed to higher grade levels when the students are unprepared to be promoted to the higher grade level.

Also attached are:

- *All about* the August Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts
- Quick *Statistical Data* for August Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts
- *Credits needed* to be promoted through the BCPSS
- *Written testimony*

Marguerite M. Currin

Committee Staff: Marguerite Murray Currin
Direct Inquiries to: (443) 984-3485

Date: April 5, 2021



BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL

ROBERT STOKES, Sr., 12th District

Committees: Education, Workforce, and Youth (Chair); Economic and Community Development; Ways and Means

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 11, 2021

CONTACT: Nicole Messer
410.396.4811 / 410-303-4111
Nicole.Messer@baltimorecity.gov

PRESS RELEASE

Councilman Robert Stokes Statement Regarding Baltimore City Public Schools and Augusta Fells Savage Institute

Every student is entitled to a world-class education, but major challenges persist. These challenges range from overcrowding to broken mechanical systems, from undrinkable water to digital inequities.

As the Chair of the Education, Workforce and Youth Committee, I am committed to helping students, parents, and the concerned public find answers to the issues raised by the Augusta Fells Savage Institute investigation. It is unacceptable that City Council and the public learned of these troubling issues through news reports and external sources.

I will be holding a hearing at 5 p.m. on April 8th to put several questions to the Baltimore City Schools CEO. Obviously, my colleagues on the Council and I will be looking for answers to what happened at Augusta Fells, but we all know the problem is systemic. Racist policies instituted in the past are having their intended devastating effects. During the upcoming hearing I fully expect to find Augusta Fells is not a unique by-product of that system.

We need to know where the weaknesses are and the plan to fix those weaknesses. More importantly, we need to know how the State Board of Education will use its power and authority to implement the changes needed to correct the failed system as a whole.

#

Council Resolution: 21-0035R

SEE ATTACHMENTS



[The Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts \(AFSIVA\)](#) is a public high school in Baltimore, Maryland. It is named after Augusta Savage, a sculptor associated with the Harlem Renaissance. The school opened in 2004 within the former campus of Southwestern High School as part of a program intended to break up larger high schools into smaller, more individualized schools. It graduated its first class in 2007.¹

History

Initially created without a name, the school was named for Augusta Savage by the Baltimore school board in November 2005. In January 2006, due to standardized test results, Augusta Fells Savage was identified as one of seven low-performing city schools that would require a "turnaround specialist" to assist the administration with increasing student achievement. A month later, the school board additionally proposed to move Augusta Fells Savage from its location in the former Southwestern High School complex to space within Calverton Middle School. By this time, Augusta Fells Savage shared the Southwestern campus with three other schools, with a total

¹ Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia

student population of 1,459. The school's principal would also be replaced with a new hire through the New Leaders program.²

At community meetings following the proposal, the plan's call for mixing high school students with younger students was opposed by many parents over safety concerns. Community members also complained of lack of prior consultation for the plan, and enlisted the support of politicians including (then former) Congressman Kweisi Mfume in opposing its implementation. As a result, the board decided first to postpone their final decision and then ultimately scrapped the planned move to Calverton Middle altogether. Due to the desire to completely phase out the aging Southwestern complex where it resided, the school system still sought to find a new location for Augusta Fells Savage.³

In January 2007, the school board recommended instead to relocate the school to the campus of Harlem Park Middle School instead, a site it would share with several other schools. The proposal, too, received criticism, this time from the principal of the Talent Development High School who predicted conflict between the combined groups of students, and who threatened to quit should the move take place. Another administrator of Talent Development wrote to *The Baltimore Sun* further arguing that the combination would cause trouble in the Harlem Park community due to the need for 600 to 700 additional students to commute into the neighborhood via bus every day. The predictions of disruption and trouble were rejected by Augusta Fells Savage's then-current principal, who argued the merger "could benefit students in both schools." In an op-ed, the editors of *The Sun* supported the proposal of the Talent Development High School administration, calling on the school board to extend the timeline to allow for consideration of alternative placement options. However, at the end of February, the city's school board approved the final plan to move Augusta Fells Savage to the former Harlem Park Middle building, described as "the most contentious issue" in a larger, city-wide consolidation of school buildings.⁴

2021 Controversy

In March 2021 Augusta Fells Savage made national headlines after a story about a student who failed 22 classes and missed 272 days of school went viral online. While the student had only a 0.13 GPA he ranked 62 out of 120 students. The student who was in his senior year of high school would be sent back to 9th grade to restart high school from the beginning. Maryland Governor Larry Hogan ordered an investigation into the school following the national coverage stating that "... the report was "far worse than anything" he has "heard in the whole time" he has been governor."⁵

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts

1500 Harlem Ave, Baltimore, Maryland | (410) 396-7701

#13,345-17,792 in [National Rankings](#)

Overall Score less than 25

QUICK STATS

Grades

9-12

Total Enrollment

480

Student-Teacher Ratio

17:1

Overview of Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts

Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts is ranked 166-212nd within Maryland. Students have the opportunity to take Advanced Placement® coursework and exams. The AP® participation rate at Augusta Fells Savage Institute Of Visual Arts is 35%. The total minority enrollment is 98%, and 100% of students are economically disadvantaged. Augusta Fells Savage Institute Of Visual Arts is 1 of 43 high schools in the [Baltimore City Public Schools](#).

Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts 2020 Rankings

Augusta Fells Savage Institute Of Visual Arts is ranked #13,345-17,792 in the [National Rankings](#). Schools are ranked on their performance on state-required tests, graduation and how well they prepare students for college.

Ethnicity/Race

Black	97%
White	2%
Hispanic	1%
Asian	0.2%

Two or More Races **0.2%**

American Indian/Alaskan Native **0%**

Hawaiian Native/Pacific Islander **0%**

Gender Distribution

Female 46% / Male 54%

Full-time Teachers = 29

Baltimore City Public Schools

Graduation and Promotion

Credits

To graduate, high school students must earn a minimum of **21 credits**

- **English** - 4 credits
(Courses are sequential. Students must complete English I before enrolling in English II and English II before enrolling in English III or IV)
- **Mathematics** - 4 credits
 - * Algebra I (must be taken before enrolling in Algebra II)
 - * Geometry
 - * Algebra II
 - * Additional math course (required for students who entered 9th grade in 2015 or later)
- **Science** - 3 credits
 - * Biology
 - * Second lab science (for students entering 9th grade in 2017 or later, chemistry in 10th grade)
 - * Third lab science (for students entering 9th grade in 2017 or later, physics in 11th grade)
- **Social studies** - 3 credits
 - * U.S. history
 - * American government
 - * Modern world history
- **Technology education** - 1 credit

- **Fine arts** - 1 credit
- **Physical education** - 1/2 credit
- **Health** - 1/2 credit
For students entering 9th grade in 2015 or later, mandatory CPR training is included in the Health curriculum)
- **Other** - 2 credits (same language, sequential courses), 2 credits, 4 to 6 credits (meeting CTE program requirements)
 - * World language or
 - * Advanced technology education or
 - * State-approved CTE program
- **Electives** - 2 credits

Currin, Marguerite (City Council)

From: Stokes, Robert (City Council)
Sent: Monday, March 22, 2021 11:25 PM
To: Currin, Marguerite (City Council)
Subject: Fwd: Patrice Bell

Bill file

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone
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From: patrice bell <sweetbellring@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, March 22, 2021 8:34:38 PM
To: Stokes, Robert (City Council) <Robert.Stokes@baltimorecity.gov>
Subject: Patrice Bell

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of Baltimore City IT Network Systems.
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Dear Mr. Stokes,

I heard a comment made by you during an interview that you favor a need for more social workers and psychologists in the Baltimore City School System for our students.. As a special education teacher for almost thirty years in BCPSS I can agree with your call for more mental help for all of our students.

Let me share information I shared with then Mayor Schmoke during my first year assignment to Harbor City High School on Harford Road, I was a culinary teacher and had a student who was more of a hall walker. I had concerns about him and my concerns grew greater when on more than one occasion he asked me to deposit his cash into my checking account. I asked the principal then if he could see the school psychologist, She said because he was not a special education student he would not be allowed to see the psychologist. Mayor Scmoke sent me a letter which I still have saying the student was allowed toe see the school psychologist,;

I wen't went to the mouter's' place of employment with concerns about her son wanting me to keep cash. To be honest with you the mother seemed indifferent,

The next day I walked into the office and the assistant principal stated your baby, the student., had killed his mother's boyfriend This was was alarming to me and I felt I let my student down,

I have asked over the years if a counselor has met with some of my students who by law s have counseling services on their IEP I receive an answer of no, I realize some social workers have large caseloads however this not acceptable.

Thank you for reading my email,,'
Patrice Bell
Special Educator

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 21-0035R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmembers Stokes, Bullock, Ramos, Porter, Middleton, Schleifer

Introduced and read first time: March 22, 2021

Assigned to: Education, Workforce, and Youth Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Baltimore City Public School System

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing - “Passing Through” Baltimore City Public School Students**

3 FOR the purpose of urging the Baltimore City Public School System’s CEO to explain to the City
4 Council why students are being promoted or “passed through” to higher grade levels when
5 the students are academically unprepared to move beyond their current grade level.

6 **Recitals**

7 **WHEREAS**, At Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts, a student passed only 3 classes
8 in 4 years but is almost in the top half of his class;

9 **WHEREAS**, Even though the student failed the majority of his classes every year and, in his
10 first three years at the school, was late or absent for 272 days, the student was repeatedly
11 promoted to the next grade level, and was on track to graduate this June;

12 **WHEREAS**, Nearly half of the seniors at Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts have a
13 GPA that is lower than .13;

14 **WHEREAS**, Augusta Fells is failing students by merely promoting them to the next grade
15 level rather than ensuring that the students are academically prepared for more advanced work;

16 **WHEREAS**, Promotion or the “passing through” of students who are not prepared for the next
17 grade level is likely a problem in other Baltimore City Public Schools as well;

18 **WHEREAS**, The CEO of the Baltimore City Public School System must explain why
19 Baltimore City Public Schools have promoted students regardless of whether they are
20 academically prepared for the next grade level; and how she will prevent this from reoccurring.

21 **WHEREAS**, The CEO of the Baltimore City Public School System must explain how she the
22 Baltimore City Public School System will solve this problem and fulfill their function of
23 academically preparing Baltimore City children to lead successful and productive lives.

EXPLANATION: Underlining indicates matter added by amendment.
~~Strike out~~ indicates matter deleted by amendment.

Council Bill 21-0035R

1 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE**, That the City
2 Council urges the Baltimore City Public School System’s CEO to explain to the City Council
3 why students are being promoted or “passed through” to higher grade levels when the students
4 are academically unprepared to move beyond their current grade level.

5 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the CEO of
6 the Baltimore City Public School System, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City
7 Council.