

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Catherine E. Pugh
Mayor, City of Baltimore

Marnell A. Cooper
*Chair, Baltimore City Board of
School Commissioners*

Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises
Chief Executive Officer

June 9, 2017

The Honorable Bernard C. "Jack" Young
President, Baltimore City Council
City Hall, Room 400
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Re: Position Statement
City Council Bill 17-0069

Dear Council President Young:

On May 8, 2017 the Baltimore City Council introduced the above-captioned ordinance to change the name of John Eager Howard Elementary School (#61) to Dorothy I. Height Elementary School.

As the City Council is aware, several school programs are slated to be combined as part of the 21st Century School Buildings Program. Throughout this process, City Schools needs to be mindful that such closures can be perceived as a loss of the school community's traditions, practices and "identity" for the closing school (Westside Elementary School). This identity is often tied to generations of families and large numbers of community members who attended the school. Changing the program name provides an opportunity for the closing and receiving schools to work together to create a new shared identity.


On February 14, 2017 the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners approved the request from the John Eager Howard Design Team to change the John Eager Howard program name to Dorothy I. Height Elementary School. This summer, students, staff and families will begin work to create a new mascot, motto and school song. In this way both school communities will have the opportunity to create a shared identity in time for their newly renovated, 21st Century School Building opening in January 2018.

Dorothy Height was a leader in addressing the rights of both women and African Americans, as president of the National Council of Negro Women. In the 1990s, she drew young people into her cause in the war against drugs, illiteracy and unemployment. The numerous honors bestowed upon her include the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1994) and the Congressional Gold Medal (2004). Her life of commitment to the ideals of equity and justice for all will provide a fitting example for the students and families of the combined school community.

If approved, the bill will change the name of the building and allow City Schools to include Dorothy I. Height's name on the building in time for the January 2018 opening.

Thank you for your favorable consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Sonja Brookins Santelises, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer