



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Holton

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Investigative Hearing - Should Baltimore City Have A Partially Elected School Board?

FOR the purpose of inviting parents, students, teachers, elected officials, education professionals, and other stakeholders to join the City Council in a discussion of the efficacy of changing the current method of selection of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners from appointment by the Mayor and the Governor to majority membership election by the citizens of Baltimore.

Recitals

In a 2007 policy statement, the National School Board Association states that school boards, elected or appointed by their communities, represent the community's beliefs and values and are best suited to shoulder the responsibility for preparing children to live productive and satisfying lives. The Association lists " Five Reasons for Local Control of Public Education:

1. Your school board looks out for children - first and foremost. Education is not a line item in your school board's budget - it is the only item.
2. Your school board is the advocate for your community when decisions are made about your children's education. The school board represents the public's voice in public education, providing citizen governance for what the public schools need and what the community wants.
3. Your school board sets the standard for achievement in your district, incorporating the community's view of what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. Your school board also is responsible for working with the superintendent to establish a valid process for measuring student success and, when necessary, shifting resources to ensure that the district's goals are achieved.
4. Your school board is accessible to you and accountable for the performance of the schools in your district. If the schools are not producing, it is your right as a voter to select new board members who will see to it that your students and your schools succeed.

5. Your school board is the community's education watchdog, ensuring that taxpayers get the most for their tax dollars. Public education is a \$423 billion business. In the majority of districts, school boards have taxing authority. That direct oversight - and responsibility - should not be given to politicians whose first priority is something other than education."

Nationally, about 96% of school board members are elected, and about 85% have fiscal autonomy. In Maryland, 17 of 24 boards are currently elected, and this year legislators from Anne Arundel, Harford, and Baltimore counties, as well as Baltimore City, are seeking to pass legislation to allow their subdivisions to change from an appointed school board to one elected by their constituents.

The election of 5 of the 9 members of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners will serve to enfranchise parents, increase accountability, and isolate schools from political influence. The appointment of the remaining 4 will allow for the inclusion of persons from educational, gender, professional, or ethnic backgrounds that are not represented by the members who are seated through the electoral process.

An open dialogue on the relative merits of an appointed, an elected, or a hybrid (5 elected, 4 appointed) school board is the most effective way to determine the will of those closest to, and most effected by, the governance of the Baltimore City Public School System.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That this Body invites parents, students, teachers, elected officials, education professionals, and other stakeholders to join the City Council in a discussion of the efficacy of changing the current method of selection of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners from appointment by the Mayor and the Governor to majority membership election by the citizens of Baltimore.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Honorable Chairs and Members of the Baltimore City Senate and House Delegations to the Maryland General Assembly are invited to take part in the discussion on the merits of a partially elected school board.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Honorable Chairs and Members of the Senate and House Delegations to the Maryland General Assembly, the CEO of the Baltimore City Public School System, the Chair and Members of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners, the Baltimore Council of Parent Teacher Associations, the listees of the Planning Department Directory of Community Associations, the Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of State Relations, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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