



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **BCPS students select Western Tech junior Ugonma Chike-Kalu as Student Member of the Board for 2024-2025**

*More than 9,700 middle and high school students cast ballots*

Towson, Md. – Middle and high school students from across Baltimore County have selected Western School of Technology junior Ugonma Chike-Kalu to serve as the student member of the Board of Education of Baltimore County (SMOB) for the 2024-2025 school year. Chike-Kalu's one-year term begins July 1, 2024.

This is the fifth year that all BCPS middle and high school students could cast ballots for the student member of the Board, and 9,722 students cast votes on April 4.

Ugonma Chike-Kalu's fellow candidate was Kimberly Hernandez of Dulaney High School. Prior to voting, students were able to learn more about the candidates by viewing their video Q&A sessions, videotaped speeches, and campaigning via social media and virtual school visits.

In her campaign speech, Chike-Kalu said: "Progress in academic performance and overall education simply cannot exist without addressing mental health. The reality is that students facing mental health challenges cannot learn, grow, or thrive to the fullest extent. And, still, our educational system faces a plethora of challenges beyond mental health, from opportunity gaps and lack of inclusion to issues of discrimination and resource disparities. And it is not solely about academic excellence or quick resolutions with counseling services or diversity workshops. We need to create a culture of awareness where students feel comfortable discussing their needs."

She continued, “As your potential SMOB, I am committed to breaking the cycle of inequality in our educational system. School is a pivotal moment for shaping the future, but we must acknowledge the injustice we do to those with access to an education that is simply overwhelmed with issues. We as students have the power to bridge these gaps and improve our learning environment. And I will be here for you, to work with you and to advocate for policies and initiatives that prioritize the wellbeing and opportunity of every single one of us.”

Chike-Kalu is a magnet student in Western’s Graphic Print and Design program, a member of the national honor societies for math and English, and a member of her school’s African Student Association, Dance Team, and Black Student Association. She also serves as an ambassador for the American Cancer Society – Cancer Action Network and on the Teen Advisory Board of the Baltimore County Public Library.

Her term will begin as current Student Member of the Board Kayla Drummond’s term ends. Drummond is a senior at Parkville High School and will graduate in June.

*(Editor’s note: A photo of [Chike-Kalu](#) can be found on Flickr.)*

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[Baltimore County Public Schools](#), the nation’s 22nd largest school system, engages and empowers its talented students, teachers, staff, and stakeholders and strives to build an innovative and collaborative learning community where all students excel and reach their highest potential.

*Engage. Empower. Excel.*