Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners  
200 E. North Avenue  
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

ADVISORY OPINION OF THE ETHICS PANEL

The panel is issuing this advisory opinion pursuant to Policy BCA Code of Ethics Section III(B)(5), which provides that “[a]ny Board member, student commissioner, official, employee or other person subject to the provisions of this policy may request an advisory opinion from the Ethics Panel concerning the application of this policy.”

On December 4, 2020, the Ethics panel received a request for an Advisory Opinion regarding whether the City Schools Communications Office can present vendors and community partners with a “Community Champion” award certificate at each board meeting January through June of 2021. The request was sent by [redacted]. Below are the Findings and Recommendations from the Ethics Panel meeting of December 16, 2020.

FINDINGS

There is no clear implication of the BCA Code of Ethics in this situation, since an internal or external vendor or community partner is not receiving a monetary gift.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important to avoid showing favoritism to one vendor (that may do business with City Schools) and avoiding the appearance of impropriety. For example, if an employee of the Office of Communications chooses to recognize a vendor who prints materials for City Schools, it may be appropriate for another employee of a different department to stand in on the selection panel.

This advisory opinion is based solely on the facts as presented. The Panel expresses no opinion as to matters that may exist now or in the future that have not been presented. Panel decisions are based on a case-by-case examination of the relevant factual information and applicable regulations.

Date: January 19, 2021  
Respectfully submitted,

[Signature]

The Reverend Domanic A. Smith, M.Div., CHM  
Chair, Baltimore City Public Schools Ethics Panel