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of Howard County**

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**Board of Education of Howard County  
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate,  
Finance Committee  
February 17, 2022**

**SB0421: UNFAVORABLE**

**Primary and Secondary Schools – Bus Driver Wages – Study**

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) opposes **SB0421 Primary and Secondary Schools – Bus Driver Wages – Study** due to the unintended consequences of the requirements for the proposed study.

By July 1, 2022, the Governor's Workforce Development Board must evaluate the following under SB0421 and report the findings to local governments, county boards of education, and the General Assembly:

- The possibility of paying prevailing wage rates, which is the estimated hourly rate of wages paid in the locality as determined by the Governor's Workforce Development Board, to bus drivers; and
- Study and identify the wages that must be paid to bus drivers to ensure that the vacancy rate for bus drivers is below 2% of the total number of bus drivers needed to serve primary and secondary schools in the State.

While typically in the context of construction projects, as a legislative platform the Board opposes legislation that limits local flexibility in the use of prevailing wages.

Moreover, the second evaluation tasked to the Governor's Workforce Development Board as specifically worded in SB0421 above could harm local jurisdictions. For instance, where one county in a more rural/less expensive location is fully staffed, and they pay a lower wage, this would "indicate" that the rest of the state should pay what they are paying. Another area of concern is the potentially unattainable identification of wages that will "ensure" a less than 2% vacancy rate. While in theory increasing wages should attract more drivers, money is not the only reason for a driver shortage. The study makes no mention of the consideration of benefit packages offered by a county or contractor. A wage study could be beneficial to local school systems, however, such a study needs to compare all compensation and not include wording such as "must be paid."

For these reasons, we urge a UNFAVORABLE report of SB0421 from this Committee.