



**Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland House of Delegates,
Ways and Means Committee
March 31, 2022**

**Board of Education
of Howard County**

Vicky Cutroneo, *Chair*
Antonia Watts, *Vice Chair*
Christina Delmont-Small
Yun Lu, Ph.D.
Jennifer Swickard Mallo
Jolene Mosley
Chao Wu, Ph.D.
Peter J. Banyas
Student Member

Michael J. Martirano, Ed.D.
*Superintendent
Secretary/Treasurer*

**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 September 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. An amendment by the Senate did attempt to address regional variations, however only in the context of prevailing wages.

Another area of concern is the potentially unattainable identification of wages that will "ensure" a less than 2% vacancy rate. Amendments made before passage in the Senate incorporate one of Howard County's concerns that money is not the only reason for a driver shortage, by adding 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 reasons for staffing shortages along with potential solutions and not include wording such as "must be paid" or "must be provided."

For these reasons, despite improvements made in the Senate, we continue to urge an UNFAVORABLE report of SB0421 from this Committee.