



**Board of Education
of Howard County**

Jennifer Swickard Mallo, *Chair*

Yun Lu, Ph.D., *Vice Chair*

Linfeng Chen, Ph.D.

Jacky McCoy

Jolene Mosley

Robyn C. Scates, Esq.

Antonia Watts

Lamia Ayaz
Student Member

William J. Barnes
*Acting Superintendent,
Secretary/Treasurer*

**Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland House of Delegates,
Ways and Means Committee
February 26, 2024**

HB1350: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

**Howard County Board of Education - Board Member Terms and Compensation
Commission Ho. Co. 2-24**

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **HB1350 Howard County Board of Education - Board Member Terms and Compensation Commission Ho. Co. 2-24** with amendments to remove the changes in term length for members, leaving only the needed adequate compensation review.

Ho.Co. 2-24 adjusts Board of Education member terms in Howard County based on four- and six-year terms as well as top vote getting starting with the 2024 election. Subsequently, four-year terms would start with the 2028 election and be phased in until 2032 when all seven elected Board members would return to equal term lengths. Currently five Board of Education seats are up for election in one cycle and two seats in the next. Once all terms return to four-year terms under Ho.Co. 2-24, three seats would be up for election in one cycle and four seats in the next.

The Board opposes all amendments proposed in Education Article § 3-701 because such changes in local election cycles are too soon after the prior changes to create councilmanic and at large seats for the Board of Education under [HB0590](#) of 2019. Howard County residents need time to see how the current process works and discover any lessons learned.

Ho.Co. 2-24 also contains provisions to establish a Howard County Board of Education Compensation Commission. The Commission would consist of five residents of Howard County to be appointed by the Howard County Executive and confirmed by the Howard County Council. Members would be appointed starting in January of 2025 and serve four years and may not be employed by the Board of Education or have a relative who is a member of the Board. The Howard County Government must staff the Commission. The role of the Commission would be to study the salaries of the members of the Board. By September 1, 2025, the Commission must issue a report regarding recommendations for appropriate compensation for Board of Education members, the Chair, and a scholarship amount for the Student Member of the Board. Reports would subsequently be required every four years. Once the Council receives the Commission's report, they may recommend changes to the salary, however not more than the recommendation of the Commission. If approved by resolution, the Council would then submit to the Howard County Delegation who have the option to alter the salary of Board members via legislation.

As a legislative priority for the 2024 session, the Board supports legislation that would increase Board member salaries in Howard County. Under Education Article § 3-703, Board members serving Howard County are each paid \$16,000 annually, with the Chair

Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Ways and Means Committee
February 26, 2024

of the Board receiving \$18,000. In other counties across Maryland, annual local board member salaries range up to \$25,000 (Montgomery County). For elected officials specifically serving Howard County, through a Compensation Review the current base salary for the first year of a County Council member's term ranges from \$73,663 up to \$83,256 in the fourth year. The Council Chair receives an additional \$3,500 annually. Board members are expected to attend multiple meetings per month, set governing policy, and manage a budget totaling over one billion dollars. While only one portion of the total public services provided to county residents, Board members represent nearly 9,000 employees, over 56,000 students, and the Howard County community at large through stewardship of taxpayer revenues. Over 50 percent of county taxpayer dollars are managed by the Board. Investments in Board salaries need to reflect the executive level demands of the position, and increases would also help attract a diverse pool of candidates.

With an amendment to remove all portions related to changes in Board member term lengths, leaving only the Howard County Board of Education Compensation Commission, we urge a FAVORABLE report of HB1350 from this Committee.