



Date: March 20, 2025

Bill Number/Title: HB 658 - Juvenile Services Education Board - Alterations

Committee: Senate Judicial Proceedings and Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment

Board Position: Favorable

The Juvenile Services Education Board (the Board) respectfully requests a favorable report on HB 658, which seeks to alter the operations of the Board.

In 2021, the Maryland General Assembly passed SB 497, which created the Juvenile Services Education Board and Program (JSEP). This law transferred the responsibility for educating youth in the custody of the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to the newly established, independent JSEP Board.

As members of this committee may know, while JSEP receives essential operational support from DJS, the Board is solely responsible for the oversight and approval of educational services provided to all juveniles in a DJS residential facility, as defined under § 9–226 of the Human Services Article. The JSEP Superintendent leads the program by overseeing the implementation and management of educational services aligned with MSDE’s graduation requirements.

As the JSEP Board and Superintendent near the conclusion of the program’s fourth year this summer, the Board discussed recommendations to strengthen operations. HB 658 is a result of these discussions.

To address outstanding operational issues, the Board asks the Committee to consider the following amendments in HB 658:

Amendment 1: Allow additional officials to have designees

The Board proposes amendments to permit the designation of representatives for the State Superintendent of Schools and the Secretary of Higher Education, in line with the current provision for the Office of the Attorney General. This change would allow these officials, should they choose, to delegate a designee to represent them. As an education program, it is essential that the perspectives of educators are included in discussions that impact the education of JSEP students.

Amendment 2: Implement staggered term limits

When the Board was established in 2021, staggered term limits were not incorporated into the structure. To prevent an excessive turnover of members at any one time, we propose the inclusion of staggered term limits in the statutory language. This amendment would facilitate the Board's ability to smoothly transition new members while preserving continuity and institutional knowledge.

Amendment 3: Create term limits

The Board recommends the establishment of term limits, restricting members to two consecutive terms. This amendment would provide the opportunity for continuity, should the Governor's office choose to retain appointed members, while also ensuring new perspectives by allowing other members of the public to participate in the Board's work after each term.

Amendment 4: Change the meeting requirement to 10 meetings a year

The Board requests a change in the number of meetings to at least 10 meetings a year instead of the 12 meeting requirement currently in statute. This would allow flexibility in the Board's meeting schedule to accommodate yearly occurrences such as holidays or use time efficiently if there are no pressing agenda items. Additionally, including provisions on how special meetings are called clarifies the process.

The Board is committed to the program's continued progress, and we believe the amendments in HB 658 will contribute to more effective and efficient operations. We urge a favorable report on HB 658. Thank you for your consideration.

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