

**BILL:** House Bill 1317  
**TITLE:** County Superintendents – Contracts – Required Provisions  
(Superintendent Buyout Limit)  
**HEARING DATE:** March 5, 2025  
**POSITION:** UNFAVORABLE  
**COMMITTEE:** Ways and Means  
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all the state’s local boards of education, opposes House Bill 1317, County Superintendents – Contracts – Required Provisions (Superintendent Buyout Limit). The bill would impose state-mandated provisions on superintendent contracts, limiting local boards’ ability to negotiate terms that best serve their districts, students, and communities.

The vast majority of board-superintendent relationships are strong and productive, in part due to the legal framework guiding the search and selection process. State law already requires a four-year contract for superintendents and mandates that the State Superintendent approve all local superintendent appointments (Md. Code Ann. Educ. Art. § 4-201). Each county board of education in Maryland is responsible for administering its school district, hiring a superintendent, and ensuring high-quality leadership.

Superintendents too hold extensive legal and operational responsibilities. They serve as the executive officer, treasurer, and secretary of the district, overseeing daily operations, correspondence, and financial reporting, while ensuring compliance with state educational mandates. Given these high-level duties and the direct impact on students and schools, it is essential that local boards retain full discretion over employment terms of their superintendents, including severance provisions.

Mandating termination payouts by law, as House Bill 1317 seeks to do, would create financial burdens on school systems by requiring payments even in cases where a superintendent’s removal is justified but does not overwhelmingly and obviously meet the high threshold of removal set forth in the law. Although termination disputes are rare, when they do occur, they can be highly contentious and costly. House Bill 1317 would make these disputes even more difficult to resolve by increasing litigation and limiting settlement opportunities. These issues ultimately impact district stability, district finances, and reduce public trust, which does not benefit students or their families:

- Encouraging Legal Challenges and Reducing Settlement Incentives – If a board and superintendent relationship is strained for reasons approaching those set forth in Education Article § 4-201(e)(1) (the “Big 5” reasons for removal –

immorality, misconduct, insubordination, incompetency, and neglect of duty), the fixed payout contemplated by House Bill 1317 would encourage a lawsuit to litigate the issues as opposed to a quick settlement for the benefit of both parties and the families they serve.

- **Boards May Hesitate to Take Action When Necessary** – If a school board fears a costly, state-mandated termination payout, it may delay removing an ineffective superintendent, prolonging leadership instability and harming student outcomes.

At bottom, House Bill 1317 imposes rigid severance requirements that disrupt local governance, create unnecessary legal risks, and could divert resources away from student needs. For these reasons, MABE respectfully urges an unfavorable report on House Bill 1317.