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February 16, 2026

From: League of Women Voters Baltimore County
To: Senator Feldman, Chair, and Members of the Senate EEE Committee

Honorable Senators:

The League of Women Voters Baltimore County is writing in opposition of Senate Bill (SB)) 40.

The League is committed to expanding democratic practices. However, we have grave reservations about the bill as drafted. This bill does not increase the elected number of School Board members or align the council districts with education districts. By relying on an appointment process for four Board of Education seats, this decreases the opportunity for the public to directly choose their representation. Furthermore, an election process affords the public the opportunity to hold board members accountable for their actions or inactions.

In addition, the League has a long tradition of supporting open and transparent redistricting processes. The League was a co-plaintiff on the redistricting lawsuit that went before the US Supreme Court. Baltimore County's charter has a clear process by which to redistrict councilmanic districts after each census. This bill appoints the Maryland Department of Legislative Services to draw seven education districts. There is no defined public process or independent commission, both of which are called for in the National League of Women Voters' policy on redistricting.

Moreover, the bill maintains districts of approximately 120,000 plus residents per board member. The Baltimore County Council expanded in order to better serve residents by creating smaller populations of residents per councilmanic district. Nine elected school board members would serve, like their Council counterparts, approximately 93,000 residents. This would allow for better governance.

Already, the State legislature has unprecedented control over education. Maryland is only one of four states that are entirely fiscally dependent on local and state funding authorities. This additional control over the maps of the Baltimore County Board of Education and the gubernatorial appointment of four board members further erodes the autonomy of the Baltimore County Public Schools.

Proponents of the bill emphasize the necessity to decouple the education districts from the councilmanic districts. Yet the collaboration between the Baltimore County Board of Education

members and their Council counterparts is invaluable in advocating for additional state funding, addressing transportation and community issues as they arise and coordinating programming and resources across a district.

Fundamentally the League supports democracy. This bill creates an additional layer of geographic representation that will add to voter confusion and increases the likelihood of down ballot drop off. Furthermore, the expansion of the Council is intended to expand the racial and cultural composition of the Council with the creation of two Black majority districts and one majority minority district. This bill does not afford voters the opportunity to increase diversity on the Board of Education through the election process.

The League of Women Voters Baltimore County urge the EEE Committee to report unfavorably on SB40.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ramona N. Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R".

Ramona N. Johnson
President