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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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Testimony SB99: Local Boards of Education Transparency
Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
Wednesday, February 4th, 2026, 2:00 PM

Maryland's public schools are the backbone of our communities and represent one of our largest and most important public investments. The decisions made by local Boards of Education directly affect all Marylanders. Given the breadth of their authority and the significant public resources they oversee, these boards should operate under consistent and reliable standards for transparency, public access, and record-keeping.

Currently, there is no statewide framework governing how the twenty-four local Boards of Education provide meeting access, maintain records, or disclose their decision-making-- unlike other public bodies. This absence of statewide standards results in significant variation in openness and accountability across jurisdictions. For example:

- Anne Arundel County's statute contains no general standard for public meetings and references transparency only in the narrow context of removing a board member;
- Baltimore County has transparency language, but it appears under a section titled *Election of Chair and Vice Chair*, which could be confusing; and
- Montgomery County's law requires that all board actions occur in a public meeting with a public record.

Since 2017, Delegate Marc Korman and I have partnered to strengthen government transparency. Together, we have sponsored and passed legislation affecting the State Board of Elections, State Departments and Agencies, and our local Boards of Elections. Our efforts have provided public access, more timely information, and greater accountability. This session, we seek to bring these same principles to local Boards of Education.

SB99 would establish uniform transparency requirements that apply to all twenty-four local Boards of Education. The bill would require Boards to:

- Post agendas, finalized documents, public testimony, and meeting materials at least 48 hours in advance-- or as early as practicable during emergencies.
- Live-stream all public proceedings, except when held off-site for a project visit or inspection.

- Prepare and post written minutes from open sessions within two business days of approval.
- Maintain online archives of agendas, minutes, and video recordings for at least five years.

Many counties have already adopted these best practices voluntarily. Dorchester, Garrett, Kent, Montgomery, and Worcester counties live-stream their meetings and maintain online archives of agendas, minutes, and videos. Other counties offer some access, but practices vary widely. Residents should not have to rely on the preferences or resources of their county to access basic public information.

Just as the General Assembly acted last year to improve transparency for local Boards of Elections, we now have the opportunity to provide clarity and consistency for local Boards of Education. This legislation ensures that all Marylanders, regardless of jurisdiction, can more easily follow the decisions that affect their children, their schools, and their tax dollars.

SB99 will strengthen public trust, improve civic engagement, and provide every Marylander with the access they deserve.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB99.