

Oppose HB218/SB218

Annette Love 2603 Terrapin Rd. Silver Spring, MD 20906

Dear Maryland State Senators and Representatives,

My name is Annette Love and I am a resident of Silver Spring. I regret that I cannot be here in person today, as I teach all day on Wednesdays. I am submitting written testimony to urge you to oppose HB218/SB218.

This bill grants one unelected official unilateral authority to declare a state of emergency and close schools statewide. Decisions of this magnitude affect students, families, educators, and communities across Maryland. In most areas of government, emergency powers require collaboration among multiple leaders and agencies. I am concerned that this proposal removes critical checks and balances from decisions that deserve broad oversight and public accountability.

Maryland already has systems in place to respond to emergencies involving public health and safety. Before expanding authority in this way, I believe it is important to ask: what specific emergency scenario exists today that current law cannot address? And why would such a drastic shift in governance be necessary without clearly defined limits, criteria, or shared decision-making?

I was deeply impressed by the response of Maryland's lawmakers during the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, I was both the parent of a second grader and a part-time teacher, and I experienced those decisions from multiple perspectives. While not everyone agreed with every choice, the process allowed for transparency, public input, and accountability. That mattered. If a future emergency arises and families or educators disagree with how it is handled, what recourse will exist if the decision rests with a single, unelected official?

Teaching is my career. I have taught in public schools in Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's Counties. As a former public school teacher, I want to emphasize that school closures are not abstract policy tools—they are lived experiences for students and educators. I have been

in classrooms where sudden, top-down decisions disrupted learning, strained student mental health, and placed enormous burdens on teachers and families. Even when closures are well-intentioned, the consequences are long-lasting and fall most heavily on our most vulnerable students. Because I've seen how difficult it is to recover from these disruptions, I believe any emergency authority over school closures must be narrowly defined, locally informed, and subject to strong checks and balances.

Emergency authority should be rare, limited, transparent, and shared—especially when it affects every child in the state. Thank you for your time and consideration. Please vote to oppose HB218/SB218.

Sincerely,

Annette Love