



February 2, 2026

Dear Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

The Baltimore County Parent and Student Coalition (BCPASC) represents 5,000 nonpartisan residents and advocates who prioritize students in Baltimore County Public Schools. We submit this UNFAVORABLE written testimony on SB 218, State Superintendent of Schools Prolonged State of Emergency Authority.

BCPASC formed in late 2020 when parents united to demand the reopening of Baltimore County schools. Maryland was among the last three states in the nation to reopen public schools and an outlier compared to our regional neighbors. Schools serve far more than education. They provide safe havens for children escaping abusive homes, meals, clothing, mental health support, and services for students with disabilities.

The COVID lockdowns proved catastrophic for Maryland students. Thousands still suffer permanent learning loss, while mental health crises including anxiety, depression, and screen addictions continue to plague families. Virtual learning programs varied wildly in quality across districts, consistently failing our most vulnerable students.

We were shocked to see this legislation even under consideration. Maryland's strength lies in local control, where each jurisdiction's unique needs are met by leaders directly accountable to voters through voice and ballot. SB 218 would upend this principle by granting an unelected, appointed State Superintendent, accountable only to the Governor, unilateral power to declare prolonged school closures and mandate virtual learning.

Even Superintendent Dr. Carey Wright, respected for her research driven approach, should not wield Governor level emergency powers without direct voter accountability. Recent winter storm closures laid bare these inequities in Baltimore County alone: K-2 students received paper packets due to no 1:1 devices; grades 3-5 got devices without chargers and

mostly asynchronous work; secondary students needed home motivation and support for virtual lessons; and special education services effectively disappeared.

These challenges during short closures would multiply exponentially under prolonged state mandated shutdowns.

BCPASC urges a UNFAVORABLE vote on SB 218. Prolonged school closures devastated Maryland children once before. We cannot hand unelected bureaucrats the power to repeat this damage. Local elected leaders, accountable to the people, must retain authority over school operations during emergencies.

Protect local control. Protect our children. Vote UNFAVORABLE on SB 218.

Sincerely,

Baltimore County Parent and Student Coalition (BCPASC)

5000+ parents, students, and advocates for Baltimore County Public Schools