

SB 40 Testimony_School Board Redistricting_EEE 2.1

Uploaded by: Charles Sydnor III

Position: FAV

CHARLES E. SYDNOR III, ESQ.
Legislative District 44
Baltimore County

DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP

Judicial Proceedings Committee
Executive Nominations Committee
Legislative Policy Committee

Joint Committees

Administrative, Executive, and
Legislative Review

Children, Youth, and Families

Senate Chair, Legislative Ethics



James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 216
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3612
800-492-7122 Ext. 3612
Charles.Sydnor@senate.maryland.gov

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony for Senate Bill 40
Baltimore County Board of Education – Alterations of Elected Member
Districts and Establishment of Redistricting Process
Before the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
February 18, 2026

Good afternoon, Chair Feldman and distinguished members of the committee.

Senate Bill 40 (“SB 40”) is a reintroduction of last year’s Senate Bill 656 (“SB656”), which passed out of the Senate in a 44-3 vote, but failed to pass out of the Baltimore County House Delegate after a 9-4 vote failed to meet the required 11 vote threshold to receive a letter of support.

Concerns were raised by a few of our House colleagues regarding the political implications of having the Baltimore County Board of Education submit the initial proposed redistricting map to the General Assembly. To assuage these concerns, we have changed the legislation to have the Department of Legislative Services draw the district lines. Outside of this alteration, the bill remains the same as SB656.

This year, Baltimore County will be holding elections for a number of elected offices, including our school board. While the Baltimore County Board of Education consists of 12 members,¹ seven board members are seated after participating in a nonpartisan election. Under current law one member is “elected from each of the seven councilmanic districts in the county, established by the County Council of Baltimore County, by the voters of that district”²

In the summer of 2024, the County Council introduced a Charter amendment in Bill No. 47-24 which proposed to increase the number of council members from 7 to 9, beginning with the 2026 election cycle. Section 5 of the bill states that:

¹ Education Code §3-2B-01(a).

² Education Code §3-2B-01(b)(1)(i).

... the thirtieth day following the general election on November 5, 2024, the County Executive and County Council shall send written notification to the Baltimore County delegation to the Maryland General Assembly that §3-2B-01 of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland relating to the composition and method of election of the Baltimore County Board of Education is to be amended to consist of: nine nonpartisan elected members, elected from the nine councilmanic districts of Baltimore County, as set forth in this Act, by the voters of that councilmanic district; two appointed members; and one student member.

While Baltimore County voters expanded the County Council from seven Councilmembers to nine, the County Council did not have the authority to bind us to enact legislation to increase the number of elected members of the school board to nine and reduce the number of appointed members from four to two. This authority rests with us to determine how—and if—the State provisions will be amended.

After seeking the input of key stakeholders, it became clear that they did not want a larger school board. It was also clear that decreasing the number of gubernatorial appointments was unacceptable as well. So, I set out to produce a method that kept things as close to status quo as possible but addressed the reality that the number of our elected school board members were tied to a seven-member County Council.

SB 40 proposes that new framework. If we do not want to increase the school board's size, and we do not want to modify the balance we have with our hybrid board, we have to create school board districts separate and apart from County Council districts. SB 40 uses the seven current council districts and converts them to school board districts.³ We would use these current council districts for the 2026 and 2030 elections and Baltimore County voters will continue to vote for a school board member who would be a resident living within their school board district.

This arrangement, with nine council districts and seven school board districts, is the same arrangement as if this legislature made no decision this session.

Under SB 40 and beginning with the next decennial U.S. Census in 2030, school board districts will be reapportioned after each census,⁴ effective until the following decennial U.S. Census.⁵

Starting with the 2034 General Election, one member will be elected from each of the seven school board districts established by the aforementioned redistricting process. The reapportioned districts will be substantially equal in population.⁶

Our voters are capable of understanding multiple layers of districts. Baltimore County is divided into nine County Council districts, eight State legislative districts, and four federal congressional districts. And council members, state representatives, and federal legislators work together to address the needs of our Baltimore County residents. I believe in our elected school board members' ability to do the same, just as the four appointed at-large members currently do.

³ See proposed Education Code §3-2B-01(b)(1)(i)(1).

⁴ See proposed Education Code §3-2B-11(B)(1)1.

⁵ See proposed Education Code §3-2B-11(B)(1)2.

⁶ See proposed Education Code §3-2B-11(B)(2).

In conclusion, as I noted at the beginning of my testimony, current law dictates that that one member is “elected from each of the seven councilmanic districts in the county, established by the County Council of Baltimore County, by the voters of that district”, so we cannot wait until the next legislative session to address this; we have to address this matter this session. In 2026, there will be nine Council districts and no longer align with the Education Code. For that and the aforementioned reasons, I ask this Committee for a favorable report on SB 40.

SB40 FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Qamryn Askew

Position: FAV



Maryland Youth Advisory Council
c/o Governor's Office Children
45 Calvert Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Graham Snyder, *Chair*
Joyce Yun, *Vice Chair*
Qamryn Askew, *Legislative Chair*

February 18, 2026

*Senate Bill 40 - Baltimore County Board of Education - Alterations of Elected Member Districts and
Establishment of Redistricting Process
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee*

Dear Chair Feldman and the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) supports the establishment of a redistricting process for the Baltimore County Board of Education. Given the emergency status of Senate Bill 40, we believe this legislation will ensure proper representation and accurately reflect the changing demographics of students and their families.

We recognize that councilmanic districts may not always align with specific communities' education interests, and we support the transition to distinct school board districts beginning in 2034. Senate Bill 40 outlines a clear and predictable reapportionment process, ensuring that this can effectively be carried out.

We respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 40.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Qamryn Askew". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Qamryn Askew
Legislative Chair, MYAC

SB0040 Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: sharlimar douglass

Position: FAV



SB0040 Baltimore County Board of Education - Alterations of Elected Member Districts and Establishment of Redistricting Process

Position: Favorable

February 18, 2026

The Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE), a coalition of education advocacy, civil rights, and community-based organizations committed to eliminating racial disparities in Maryland's education system, **writes in strong support of SB40 which addresses a critical structural challenge in Baltimore County's school board representation.** While this bill's immediate necessity stems from practical considerations—the County Council's expansion from seven to nine districts—it presents a profound opportunity to advance educational equity through more intentional representation.

I commend Senator Sydnor for his leadership in addressing this matter with both urgency and thoughtfulness. As the Senator notes, current law requires school board members to be elected from councilmanic districts. With the County Council expanding to nine districts in 2026, we face a legal misalignment that demands immediate resolution. SB 40 provides a measured approach: maintaining the current seven elected seats while decoupling school board districts from councilmanic boundaries.

This is not merely a technical fix. This is an opportunity to reimagine how Baltimore County structures democratic accountability for its schools. Educational governance is fundamentally about whose voices shape decisions affecting our children. The current system, while functional, ties school board representation to boundaries drawn primarily for general government purposes. These boundaries may not reflect:

Educational communities of interest. School attendance zones, feeder patterns, and clusters of schools that serve interconnected communities often cross councilmanic district lines. Parents and educators organizing around specific schools or regional educational challenges may find their collective voice fragmented across multiple districts.

Demographic representation relevant to educational equity. Baltimore County, like many districts, has communities with distinct educational needs shaped by race, income, language, and historical access to resources. If councilmanic boundaries dilute concentrations of communities that have been historically underserved by education systems, school board-specific redistricting could create districts where these communities have genuine electoral influence over education policy.

Student-centered boundaries. Rather than being an afterthought to general governance, district lines could be drawn with student populations, educational access, and learning outcomes as primary considerations.

MAREE is committed to racial equity in education and the development of culturally responsive educators; we see this decoupling as essential groundwork. It creates the structural possibility for representation that truly centers educational justice. SB 40's framework—freezing current councilmanic districts as school board districts through 2030, then requiring redistricting after each decennial census—gives Baltimore County eight years to develop a redistricting process that actively promotes educational equity.

Just as we advocate for culturally responsive teaching in classrooms, we must advocate for culturally responsive structures in educational governance. This means representation systems that recognize and honor the diverse communities they serve, that create space for voices historically excluded from power, and that design accountability to flow toward families and students rather than away from them.

SB 40 creates the infrastructure for this kind of governance. It will not automatically deliver educational equity—no structural change alone can do that. But it removes an arbitrary constraint and creates new possibilities. How Baltimore County uses this opportunity will depend on continued advocacy, community organizing, and political will.

Our children deserve school board members who are accountable to the communities most affected by educational decisions. This bill moves us closer to that goal.

peace & truth,
sharlimar douglass
Education Justice Advocate & Analyst
Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE)

Letter Opposing SB40 to Senate EEE Committee.pdf

Uploaded by: Mary Taylor

Position: UNF



6600 York Road, Suite 211
Baltimore, MD 21212
410.377.8046
contact@lwvbaltimorecounty.org

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, flowing style.

Ramona N. Johnson
President