

Letter of Support with Amendment SB 099_HB 0154 Op

Uploaded by: Alita-Geri Carter

Position: FAV



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February 2, 2026

RE: SB 099/HB 0154 Open Meetings Act - County Boards of Education - Enhanced Requirements (Local Boards of Education Transparency Act)
Position: Favorable with Amendment

Dear Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Honorable Members of The Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

I am Alita-Geri Carter, the owner of Qualequity Access, LLC., a consultancy grounded in data-driven transformation that advocates for quality, equity, access, and accessibility in healthcare and education. I am the mother of two children with disabilities, a former practicing nursing practitioner, special education parent advocate, and public health servant.

I am writing to express my strong support for **Senate Bill 99 (Local Boards of Education Transparency Act)**. This legislation represents a critical step forward in ensuring that local boards of education remain accountable to the families and students they serve. The requirement for live video streaming and the digital publication of agendas and minutes is a necessary modernization of the Open Meetings Act. By removing physical barriers to attendance, this bill allows a broader range of stakeholders, including working parents and individuals with disabilities to participate in the democratic process of educational governance.

However, to ensure the bill achieves its maximum potential for transparency, I respectfully suggest the following amendments:

- **Timely Disclosure:** Require agendas to be posted no later than 48 hours prior to the meeting.
- **Accessibility Standards:** Explicitly mandate closed captioning for all live and archived video content to ensure ADA compliance or a requirement for transcripts to be provided within 60 days upon request to the entity's custodian.
- **Digital Preservation:** Specify that archived recordings must be stored in a searchable, user-friendly format on the board's website for the duration of the 5-year requirement.

With these enhancements, SB 99/HB0154 will provide Marylanders with the level of transparency and engagement they deserve from their local school systems. I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 99 with these minor amendments.

Respectfully Submitted,
Alita-Geri Carter, MSN, DNP-C, CPNP-PC, BCPA
Resident, Howard County, MD

SB0099_Open_Meetings_Act_Local_Boards_of_Education

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY FOR SB0099
Open Meetings Act – County Boards of Education – Enhanced Requirements
(Local Boards of Education Transparency Act)

Bill Sponsor: Senator Kagan

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0099 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

One of the newest fronts in the culture wars in this country is education. There are several areas of contention that affect how our children learn and interact with others that have caused incredible dismay among parents – banning of books; teaching of history; allowing transgender students use the restroom that aligns with their gender identity; and allowing transgender students to play sports with other students of the gender they identify with.

As a result, decisions of the Board of Education have become contentious along with the meetings themselves. It is imperative that parents and students are able to stay abreast of these meetings. This bill, if enacted, would require county Boards of Education publish the agenda, minutes of the meeting, and live video streaming of each portion of a meeting held in open session on their website and maintain them in an archive on the website for 5 years.

Our members feel that this is important not only as a record of how decisions changed over time, and what the issues were, but as a means for staying involved for parents and students who cannot attend the meetings.

We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

SB 99 - State Board - SUPPORT.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Hannah Oakley

Position: FAV

TO: Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

BILL: Senate Bill (SB) 99 – Open Meetings Act – County Boards of Education – Enhanced Requirements (Local Boards of Education Transparency Act)

DATE: February 4, 2025

POSITION: Support

Chair Feldman and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) shares the following information in support of **SB 99**, which would enhance the Open Meetings Act requirements for county boards of education by strengthening standards for public notice, access, and documentation of board meetings.

The State Board appreciates the intent of SB 99 to promote transparency in public education governance and recognizes that open and accessible decision-making is essential to maintaining confidence and trust in local and state education institutions.

Transparency is a core principle of the State Board’s work. In furtherance of that, the State Board provides advance notice of meetings, publishes agendas and materials, and deliberates openly on matters affecting students, families, educators, and communities across Maryland. The State Board holds itself to the same standards of openness and accountability that it expects of local boards of education, consistent with the Open Meetings Act and other applicable laws.

The State Board remains committed to working collaboratively with the General Assembly, county boards of education, and other stakeholders to promote transparency throughout Maryland’s public education system. The Board stands ready to share its own practices and experiences, as appropriate, to support consistent and effective implementation of open governance principles statewide.

The State Board requests that the committee consider this information as it deliberates **SB 99**. Please contact Zach Hands, Executive Director of the State Board, at Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov or at 443-915-6094, if you would like any additional information.

SB99_MSEA_Cook_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Jessica Cook

Position: FAV

FAVORABLE
Senate Bill 99
Open Meetings Act-County Boards of Education-Enhanced Requirements
(Local Boards of Education Transparency Act)

Education, Energy, and the Environment
February 04, 2026
2:00 pm

Jessica Cook
Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 99. The legislation would require each local board of education and the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners to make the agenda, meeting minutes, and a live stream video of each portion of an open session meeting publicly available on their website. We strongly support the expansion of public access and transparency.

MSEA represents 76,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools and community colleges, teaching and supporting our almost 900,000 K-12 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA represents more than 44 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

MSEA believes boards of education must be transparent, accountable, and responsive to the needs and perspectives of the entire community they serve. This bill would enhance the requirements under the Open Meetings Act and thus expand community access, helping to ensure that decision-making processes are democratic and inclusive of community stakeholders.

We also recommend the inclusion of reasonable, specific exceptions to protect student and educator privacy and ensure decency in publicly available recordings.

We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on Senate Bill 99.

Michael_Butkiewicz_SB99_OpenMeetings_2026.pdf

Uploaded by: Michael Butkiewicz

Position: FAV

Michael Butkiewicz

9904 Belhaven Road, Bethesda, Maryland 20817

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

SB 99 Open Meetings Act - County Boards of Education - Enhanced Requirements

Bill Hearing Date February 4th, 2026

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Michael Butkiewicz. I am an author and civic-education researcher from Montgomery County, and my work has appeared across regional outlets. I write today in support of SB 99, which formally establishes Maryland's county boards of education as public bodies under § 3-307 of the General Provisions Article.

After reviewing the bill closely, I have found no substantive flaws. Transparency is the foundation of any public body, regardless of its specific functions. County boards of education rely on both state and county officials, such as yourselves, to allocate the funding that enables them to operate. A peer-reviewed study in BMC Psychology identifies transparency as one of the strongest predictors of organizational trust across public institutions, explicitly framing it as a core variable shaping public confidence in governing bodies.¹

And the logic is straightforward: communities do not support, advocate for, or fund institutions they do not trust. This is not merely a categorical claim but a scalar one. County boards of education compete with police, emergency services, parks, transportation, health departments, and many other agencies for limited county resources. In this environment, trust is not symbolic, it is strategic.

SB 99 is therefore not only about ensuring the public feels represented. It is about strengthening the long-term conditions under which Marylanders are willing to support their school systems. When people feel respected, informed, and included, they are more likely to engage, and more willing to support the expenditures necessary to improve educational outcomes.

¹ Source: Transparency and Organizational Trust: A Meta-Analytic Review, BMC Psychology (2025)

This matters profoundly for civic education. Transparency strengthens the ecosystem in which students learn to engage with democratic institutions. Yet Maryland faces significant literacy challenges. The Maryland READS report warns of a statewide “literacy crisis,” and the 2024 NAEP results show only 29% of eighth graders reaching proficiency.² These deficits make it harder for students to navigate the complex statutory and civic texts that require interpretation, inference, and sustained attention.

While the transparency benefits of SB 99 are valuable on their own, its second-order effects are equally important. By improving institutional trust and strengthening the public’s relationship with its school systems, this bill helps create the conditions necessary for stronger literacy, deeper civic understanding, and more effective long-term governance.

This is especially consequential for lower-income Marylanders, who stand to benefit most from improved learning environments and more responsive public institutions. By enabling counties and schools to better support students’ development of literacy, focus, and judgment, we move closer to a system in which all Marylanders, regardless of income, are equipped to understand their civic institutions, recognize their stake in them, and make their voices heard.

Please report favorably on SB 99.

Thank you.

² Source: 2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Grade 8 Reading results.

SB 99 - Open Meetings Act - County Boards of Educa

Uploaded by: Morgan Drayton

Position: FAV

February 2, 2026

Testimony on SB 99
Open Meetings Act – County Boards of Education – Enhanced Requirements (Local Boards of Education Transparency Act)
Government, Labor, and Elections

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports SB 99, which would significantly increase access to and the efficiency of county Boards of Education by making them subject to enhanced Open Meetings Act requirements.

For too many citizens, the work done by State agencies and other public bodies is a distant and often undecipherable series of activities. Many Marylanders are unable to go to meeting locations in person despite having a strongly vested interest in the policies and decisions being made by these agencies. For those who are able attend meetings (whether in-person or online), they often don't have access to meeting materials and at times are met with an unexpected closed session.

SB 99 aims to address this by requiring that county Board meeting agendas and materials be made available in advance of these meetings online. Also, that meetings be made publicly available by live stream, and that these streams and meeting materials be archived promptly after a meeting has adjourned.

Streaming video and online access to meeting materials are easy and efficient ways to enhance Marylanders' access to agencies throughout the state. The technology to live-stream is inexpensive, widespread, and better facilitates the participation of all Marylanders. Archiving the streams along with meeting materials and minutes ensures that those who are unable to watch the live stream will have access to the footage later.

While many of these agencies and public bodies already stream their meetings, the enhanced requirements ensure Marylanders are able to meaningfully access meetings where the decisions made will impact them and their communities. It also ensures that members of the public are aware of closed sessions and when they are likely to take place during these meetings.

Coverage under the Open Meetings Act puts a clear process in place for dealing with possible violations as members of the public will be able to report complaints to the Open Meetings Law Compliance Board.

SB 99 would vastly increase Marylanders' access to the meetings and meeting materials of our County Boards of Education. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.

2-4-2026 SB 99 Requirements for State Agencies and

Uploaded by: Nancy Soreng

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE ENERGY, EDUCATION, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

SB 99 Open Meetings Act - County Boards of Education - Enhanced Requirements (Local Boards of Education Transparency Act)

POSITION: Support

BY: Linda Kohn President

Date: February 4, 2026

The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active citizen participation and requires that governmental bodies protect citizens' right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible. This has been a principle of the League since our founding in 1920.

This legislation requires each local board of education and the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners to make publicly available on its website the agenda and minutes of each meeting as well as a live video stream of each portion of a meeting held in open session. Fortunately, all these entities already maintain and post these items. The only new requirement in this bill is that the videos be posted on their school system's website, making them more easily accessible.

Over the years the sponsors of both the House and Senate versions of this bill have successfully passed legislation that continues to enhance the public's ability to follow, understand and impact policy decision-making by various public bodies by requiring consistency and modernization of the means to share information. We appreciate their commitment to refining and enhancing our right to know about the decisions that our government is making on our behalf.

We urge a favorable report on SB 99.

MDDC Support SB99.pdf

Uploaded by: Rebecca Snyder

Position: FAV



Maryland | Delaware | DC Press Association

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www.mddcpres.com

To: Education, Energy & the Environment Committee

From: Rebecca Snyder, Executive Director, MDDC Press Association

Date: February 2, 2026

Re: **SB99 - SUPPORT**

The Maryland-Delaware-District of Columbia Press Association represents a diverse membership of news media organizations, from large metro dailies like the Washington Post and the Baltimore Sun, to hometown newspapers such as The Herald-Mail and the Frederick News Post to publications such as The Daily Record, the Baltimore Times, and online-only publications such as the Baltimore Banner, Bethesda Today and Baltimore Brew.

The Press Association is pleased to support SB 99, which brings local Boards of Education firmly under the Open Meetings Act.

We believe this legislation is an important clarification that will bring more transparency and openness to bodies that have sometimes been shrouded in secrecy. In past years, similar legislation has ensured that various public bodies are subject to the OMA, and this bill continues that trend. Further, we welcome the clarity that these Boards will ensure that any livestreams will be archived in a complete and unedited format for a minimum of five years after the meeting. Journalists rely on meetings of public bodies as central parts of their reporting and our members welcome the clarity of this legislation.

The Press Association urges a favorable report.



We believe a strong news media is central to a strong and open society.

Copy of SB0099_Open_Meetings_Act_Local_Boards_of_E

Uploaded by: Rebecca Turner

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY FOR SB0099

Open Meetings Act – County Boards of Education – Enhanced Requirements (Local Boards of Education Transparency Act)

Bill Sponsor: Senator Kagan

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Rebecca Turner

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0099 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

One of the newest fronts in the culture wars in this country is education. There are several areas of contention that affect how our children learn and interact with others that have caused incredible dismay among parents – banning of books; teaching of history; allowing transgender students use the restroom that aligns with their gender identity; and allowing transgender students to play sports with other students of the gender they identify with.

As a result, decisions of the Board of Education have become contentious along with the meetings themselves. It is imperative that parents and students are able to stay abreast of these meetings. This bill, if enacted, would require county Boards of Education publish the agenda, minutes of the meeting, and live video streaming of each portion of a meeting held in open session on their website and maintain them in an archive on the website for 5 years.

Our members feel that this is important not only as a record of how decisions changed over time, and what the issues were, but as a means for staying involved for parents and students who cannot attend the meetings.

We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

Testimony in support of SB0099 - Open Meetings Act

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

02/04/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON SB#/0099- POSITION: FAVORABLE

Open Meetings Act - County Boards of Education - Enhanced Requirements (Local Boards of Education Transparency Act)

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#/0099, Open Meetings Act - County Boards of Education - Enhanced Requirements (Local Boards of Education Transparency Act)

This bill increases transparency in the conduct of public business by Maryland counties and Baltimore City on their school boards. It adds to the historical record of actions they have taken that can assist in reviewing past actions to see the genesis of those decisions. That information can assist in guiding both members of the school board and the public in creating new or modifications of existing policies that meet the moment to serve parents, students, teachers and all persons interacting with the school systems.

These policies will be promulgated by establishing enhanced requirements under the Open Meetings Act for county boards of education and the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners; requiring the county boards and the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners to maintain on their respective websites a complete and unedited archived video recording of each open meeting for which live video streaming was made available for a minimum of 5 years after the date of the meeting; etc.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#/0099.

BC - FAVORABLE_ SB99.pdf

Uploaded by: Riya Gupta

Position: FAV



SUPPORT: Senate Bill 99

Open Meetings Act - County Boards of Education - Enhanced Requirements (Local Boards of Education Transparency Act)
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 4th, 2026

The Blueprint Coalition is a coalition of more than 30 organizations representing hundreds of thousands of Marylanders and is co-led by Strong Schools Maryland and the Maryland Education Coalition. The coalition is dedicated to the full implementation and funding of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and works to ensure that Maryland's public education system meets the needs of all students, particularly those most impacted by systemic inequities. **Grounded in our shared values, the Blueprint Coalition believes that data, reporting transparency, and public accessibility are essential to ensuring the Blueprint can address structural inequities, including racism and discrimination. For these reasons, we offer favorable testimony in support of Senate Bill 99.**

Senate Bill 99 strengthens transparency and public accountability for county boards of education by requiring timely public access to meeting agendas, materials, minutes, and live and archived video of open meetings. These enhanced Open Meetings Act requirements are critical to ensuring that families, students, educators, and communities can meaningfully engage in decisions that directly affect public schools and the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

The Blueprint is a long-term, multi-billion-dollar commitment to equity, accountability, and improved outcomes for Maryland's students. Its success depends not only on funding, but on transparent governance and accessible information that allows the public to understand how decisions are made and how implementation is progressing across districts. Senate Bill 99 advances that goal by ensuring consistent public access to school board deliberations and materials statewide.

Too often, inconsistent posting of agenda, limited advance notice, or lack of archived recordings creates barriers to participation, particularly for families, educators, and students who cannot attend meetings in person or during standard work hours. Senate Bill 99 helps remove those barriers by standardizing transparency practices across all county boards of education and the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners. These requirements support meaningful community engagement and strengthen public trust in local education governance.

The Blueprint Coalition strongly believes that public accountability is not an administrative burden, but a necessary condition for equitable implementation. When communities have access to information, they are better positioned to identify challenges, elevate concerns, and partner with school systems to ensure that the Blueprint delivers on its promise.

For these reasons, the Blueprint Coalition urges the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 99.

Please contact Riya Gupta at riya@strongschoolsmaryland.org for additional questions.

Sen. Kagan SB99 Testimony_ Local Boards of Educati

Uploaded by: Sen. Cheryl Kagan

Position: FAV

CHERYL C. KAGAN
Legislative District 17
Montgomery County

Vice Chair
Education, Energy, and
the Environment Committee

Joint Audit and Evaluation Committee
Joint Committee on Federal Relations



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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.

SB0099 – Open Meetings Act – County Boards of Educ

Uploaded by: Alicia Baines

Position: FWA

SB0099 – Open Meetings Act – County Boards of Education – Enhanced Requirements

Position: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Chair and members of the Committee:

I am a Maryland parent and special education advocate. I am submitting testimony **in support of SB0099 with amendments** because transparency in school board governance is essential to protecting Maryland students, families, and taxpayers—particularly families of children with disabilities.

Why this bill matters

SB0099 strengthens the Open Meetings Act by requiring county boards of education to:

- Publicly post agendas, minutes, and meeting materials
- Livestream open sessions
- Maintain archived video recordings for **five years**

These are important steps. Boards of education make decisions that directly affect **educational access, special education services, budgets, contracts, and compliance with federal disability law**. Marylanders have a right to see how those decisions are made.

For families navigating special education disputes, open-meetings transparency is not abstract—it is often the only way to track policy changes, voting patterns, and systemic issues that affect FAPE and IDEA compliance.

Where the bill still falls short

While SB0099 improves access, it does not yet go far enough to ensure **meaningful transparency and accountability**, particularly for parents and taxpayers who rely on this information to advocate effectively.

1. No enforcement mechanism

The bill creates requirements, but it does not include clear enforcement, penalties, or remedies when boards fail to comply. Without enforcement, transparency requirements are easily ignored.

2. Agenda materials can still be incomplete

Boards are required to post “summaries of finalized documents,” but not necessarily **full documents, contracts, or policy drafts** prior to votes. This limits the public’s ability to understand what is actually being decided.

SB0099 – Open Meetings Act – County Boards of Education – Enhanced Requirements

3. Accessibility is not explicitly required

Livestreaming and archived videos are only meaningful if they are accessible. The bill does not explicitly require:

- captions
- ADA-compliant platforms
- language access for families who are not English-dominant

Families of children with disabilities should not face new barriers to participation in the name of transparency.

4. No protection against misuse of executive session

Parents routinely see boards move substantive discussions into closed session and return to open session only to vote. SB0099 does not add safeguards to prevent executive sessions from being used to avoid public accountability.

Why this matters to taxpayers

County boards of education control **billions in public funds**. Taxpayers have a right to know:

- what decisions are being made
- what contracts are approved
- how policies impacting vulnerable students are adopted

Transparency is not optional when public dollars and children's rights are involved.

Recommended Amendments

To ensure SB0099 truly protects Marylanders, I urge the Committee to add:

1. Clear enforcement provisions

Consequences for noncompliance and a complaint mechanism with timelines for correction.

2. Requirement to post full voting materials

Not just summaries—actual documents, contracts, and policy drafts prior to votes.

3. Explicit accessibility requirements

Captions, ADA-compliant platforms, and language access for livestreams and archives.

4. Stronger limits on executive session misuse

Clear standards and documentation requirements when boards move into closed session.

SB0099 – Open Meetings Act – County Boards of Education – Enhanced Requirements

Closing

SB0099 is a strong step in the right direction. With targeted amendments, it can become a meaningful transparency law that protects students, families, and taxpayers—not just governing bodies.

I respectfully urge a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Alicia Baines

Maryland Parent & Special Education Advocate

Testimony SB 99 -Open Meetings Act - County Boards

Uploaded by: Dawana Sterrette

Position: FWA

**Testimony of the
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners
Support with Amendments
Senate Bill 99 - Open Meetings Act - County Boards of Education - Enhanced Requirements
(Local Boards of Education Transparency Act)**

February 4, 2026

This legislation would make local boards of education and the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners be subjected to enhanced requirements under the Open Meetings Act. Specifically, it requires each local board of education and the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners to make publicly available on its website the agenda and minutes of each meeting and a live video stream of each portion of a meeting held in open session. The bill also requires each local board of education and the Baltimore City board of School Commissioners to maintain on its website a complete and unedited archived video recording of each open meeting where video streaming was made available for a minimum of five years after the date of the meeting. The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners prides itself as having open and transparent processes and meetings to keep the public informed of school board and school system activities.

Currently, the school board livestreams all of its public board meetings and committee meetings through the TEAMS platform. This platform allows the board meetings and committee meetings to be seen online. Furthermore, the meetings are played on Youtube, as the Baltimore City Schools has a Youtube channel. All meeting agenda and documents are posted on the City Schools website prior to all public board and committee meetings. There are also times that a committee of the Board will conduct a meeting at a school and livestream it. The Board has no concerns with having the public view live meetings.

The Board does have a concern with not allowing edited versions of the meetings once uploaded and maintaining the meetings on the City Schools website. Within the last several months, the Board was a victim of someone logging into the meeting and performing obscene and pornographic content. The person that logged onto the meeting also showed antisemitic pictures. The Board's Information Technology Office took the meeting offline while dealing with the situation, however, some of that content was visible to all viewers on line and in the meeting room. Board's need the latitude to appropriately edit the videos as this is clearly content that no one should be subjected to view.

Other issues that may appear to be worrisome is the public speaking during public comment on matters that are not allowed under the law. Even though the Board provides to speakers the rules for public comment and ask speakers the topic prior to the speaker providing testimony to the Board, sometimes people will not disclose their true topic and speak on items such as personnel issues that can, only by law, be spoken to other parties with the consent of the subject. Even though the Board provides these guidelines and the Board Chair will attempt to stop the speaker discussing unlawful items during public comment, if some of the information is spoken, the Board should have the ability to edit out such comments.

The other issue is the location of the archived material. Currently, the Board's archived meetings are found by moving to the school board's website and clicking on a link that takes it to the Youtube Platform for all meetings. There should be some language, if this bill were to pass, to allow Boards to maintain on their own website OR have an easily accessible link on the Board's website to take someone to a platform that will contain all video meetings.

For the foregoing reasons, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners supports with amendments Senate Bill 99.

Dawana Merritt Sterrette, Esq.
Executive Director, Legislative and Government Affairs
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners
443-250-0190

SB 99 - Open Meetings Act - County Boards of Educa

Uploaded by: Mary Pat Fannon

Position: FWA



Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director
1217 S. Potomac Street
Baltimore, MD 21224
410-935-7281
marypat.fannon@pssam.org

BILL: SB 99

TITLE: Open Meetings Act - County Boards of Education - Enhanced Requirements (Local Boards of Education Transparency Act)

DATE: February 4, 2026

POSITION: Favorable with Amendments

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four local school superintendents, **supports** Senate Bill 99 **with amendments**.

This bill makes local boards of education and the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners subject to enhanced requirements under the Open Meetings Act. Specifically, it requires each local board of education and the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners to make publicly available on its website the agenda and minutes of each meeting and a live video stream of each portion of a meeting held in open session. The bill also requires each local board of education and the Baltimore City board of School Commissioners to maintain on its website a complete and unedited archived video recording of each open meeting where video streaming was made available for a minimum of five years after the date of the meeting. *(Source: https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2026RS/fnotes/bil_0009/sb0099.pdf)*

PSSAM is strongly supportive of the bill and appreciates the intent to expand transparency and public access to school board meetings. We respectfully **request consideration of three amendments** we believe would strengthen implementation, while preserving access for communities across the state.

Amendment 1: Mirror Existing Statutory Language for Meeting Locations

We request consideration of language for school board meetings that mirrors the existing statutory framework applied to the Maryland Transportation Authority (lines 25–30), which requires live video streaming only at the agency's headquarters.

Applying a similar approach to school boards would preserve public access while recognizing practical realities. Many districts intentionally hold meetings in community locations - such as town halls or listening sessions - that are not conducive to live streaming. For example, Frederick County regularly conducts community conversations outside of headquarters, and Anne Arundel County Public Schools hosts public budget hearings in two community locations to improve geographic access. These meetings fully comply with Open Meetings Act notice and participation requirements, but are not always live streamed. This amendment would ensure continued access for residents in less urban or more remote areas without discouraging boards from meeting in the community.

Amendment 2: Limited Authority to Remove Pornographic or Disruptive Content

We request narrowly tailored authority to permit the removal of clearly inappropriate or pornographic content from meeting recordings. While we do not support broad or discretionary editing rights, recent instances of “Zoom bombing”—including explicit sexual conduct captured on video—raise serious concerns about permanently memorializing such content.

We suggest exploring language that would allow limited removal of such material, paired with notification to or guidance from the Open Meetings Act Compliance Board. This approach would maintain transparency while protecting the integrity of the record and the public interest.

Amendment 3: Use of Third-Party Platforms to Satisfy Posting and Storage Requirements

Finally, we request clarification that posting meeting videos on third-party platforms such as YouTube may satisfy the posting requirement, provided that all retention timelines remain unchanged. This approach is already used by the General Assembly, MSDE, the Accountability and Implementation Board, and other State entities. In practice, third-party platforms are more accessible and user-friendly for the public, while also reducing technical and storage burdens for local boards.

PSSAM appreciates the sponsor and committee’s openness to these thoughtful adjustments that support transparency while ensuring the bill works effectively for all communities across Maryland.

For these reasons, PSSAM **supports** Senate Bill 99 with the **suggested amendments** above.

SB 99 - SWA - Open Meetings Act.pdf

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Position: FWA

BILL: Senate Bill 99
TITLE: Open Meetings Act – County Boards of Education – Enhanced Requirements (Local Boards of Education Transparency Act)
HEARING DATE: February 4, 2026
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
CONTACT: Sam Mathias, Legal & Policy Director (smathias@mabe.org)

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the State’s local boards of education, **supports Senate Bill 99, Open Meetings Act – County Boards of Education – Enhanced Requirements (Local Boards of Education Transparency Act), with amendments.**

Transparency and community engagement are deeply valued by Maryland’s local boards of education. Boards take seriously their obligations under the existing Open Meetings Act and consistently work to ensure that meetings, materials, and decision-making processes are accessible to the public. Local boards also engage their communities in a variety of ways beyond formal board meetings, recognizing that meaningful public engagement takes many forms.

Senate Bill 99 would require each local board of education to post meeting agendas and minutes on its website and to livestream each portion of a meeting held in open session. The bill would also require boards to maintain a complete and unedited archived video recording of each open meeting for at least five years when livestreaming is available. Local boards already engage in these practices, except in limited situations where the meeting format or setting is designed to facilitate community engagement rather than formal deliberation.

MABE offers the following targeted amendments to ensure that the bill advances transparency while preserving effective governance and meaningful community engagement.

I. Targeted Amendment: Livestreaming and Community-Based Meetings

Local boards of education strongly value transparency and public access, and they meet all Open Meetings Act notice obligations. In practice, however, livestreaming every open meeting may affect the tone of some community-based gatherings, particularly where the goal is open dialogue and direct connection, and where some participants may be hesitant to speak on a recorded platform.

Our goal in proposing this amendment is not to limit access to board deliberations, but to preserve transparency while allowing boards to continue tailored, in-person engagement across their communities. One way to accomplish this is to mirror the existing statutory language applicable to the Maryland Transportation Authority (Md. Code., Gen. Prov. Art. § 3-307(g)) by adopting a location-based livestreaming requirement:

- (1) *This subsection applies only to a county board of education and the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners.*
- (2) *A county board of education the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners shall provide live video streaming of a meeting only if the meeting is held at:*
 - (i) *the principal administrative offices of the county board of education or the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners; or*
 - (ii) *a location at which the county board of education or the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners held at least 10 meetings during the immediately preceding calendar year.*

Local practice illustrates why this flexibility matters. For example:

- **Howard County** conducts “Coffee and Conversation” sessions several times each year at different schools, where board members, in an open meeting, rotate among tables to hear directly from community members in small-group settings. These sessions are intentionally not livestreamed or recorded. Requiring livestreaming would likely force these conversations back to a central facility, reducing access for residents without reliable cross-county transportation.
- **Frederick County** hosts community conversations and town halls in neighborhood locations to encourage participation. They are not designed for livestreaming and typically do not involve recording equipment or staff.
- **Kent County** has begun holding community conversations as a way to increase engagement and inform decision-making, including on sensitive topics such as student cell phone policies. For a small, rural system, livestreaming these meetings could be cost- and labor-prohibitive and some suggest that recording and broadcasting may have a chilling effect on open participation.

II. Limited Flexibility to Protect the Integrity of Meeting Recordings

We are requesting narrow, clearly defined flexibility to address the rare circumstances in which meeting recordings capture clearly inappropriate or pornographic

material, such as incidents of “Zoom bombing.” We are not seeking broad editing discretion over meeting content, but limited ability to prevent the permanent posting of material that is wholly unrelated to public business.

We also suggest allowing non-substantive technical edits before posting, such as removing extended meeting breaks (for example, a closed-session screen that remains visible for an extended period), so long as the substance of the meeting remains unaltered and the final recording is more accessible and usable for viewers. We look forward to working with the sponsors to draft language that accomplishes these goals while keeping the intent of the bill.

III. Clarifying the Use of Third-Party Platforms for Posting and Storage

We request clarification that posting meeting videos on commonly used third-party platforms, such as YouTube, will satisfy posting and access requirements, provided that all retention timelines remain unchanged. This approach, already used by many local boards and other public bodies identified in General Provisions Article § 3-307, supports public access while reducing technical and storage burdens without diminishing transparency.

Conclusion

For these reasons, MABE respectfully supports Senate Bill 99 with the targeted amendments outlined above. Together, these refinements would strengthen transparency while preserving the flexibility local boards need to engage meaningfully with their communities and manage meetings responsibly in practice.

We appreciate Senator Kagan, Delegate Korman, and the Committee’s thoughtful consideration of these issues and your continued collaboration with local boards of education.