

BILL: House Bill 154
TITLE: Open Meetings Act – County Boards of Education – Enhanced Requirements (Local Boards of Education Transparency Act)
HEARING DATE: February 5, 2026
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT
COMMITTEE: Ways & Means
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the State’s local boards of education, **supports House Bill 154, 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.

House Bill 154 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 House Bill 154 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 Delegate Korman, Senator Kagan, and the Committee’s thoughtful consideration of these issues and your continued collaboration with local boards of education.