

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 565 (Delegate J. Long)
Government, Labor, and Elections

County Boards of Education - Elections - District Voting (Fair Representation Act)

This bill requires that elected district members on the boards of education for Calvert, Cecil, Garrett, Montgomery, Queen Anne's, and St. Mary's counties must be elected by a plurality of the votes cast *within each district*. The bill is applicable beginning with the 2028 presidential election cycle and the bill may not be construed to affect the tenure of an elected member of a county board of education who is elected from an individual district serving in office before the beginning of the next regular full term of office that begins after the effective date of the bill.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not materially affect State operations or finances.

Local Effect: The bill does not materially affect local government operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary/Current Law: There are 20 elected school boards and 4 hybrid boards in the State. **Appendix – Local Boards of Education Membership** shows the selection methods, terms of office, and membership of the 24 local boards of education.

Baltimore City and Allegany, Carroll, Frederick, Kent, and Washington counties have no district-based representation on the local board of education. The remaining 18 local boards of education have some form of elected and district-based representation, with members

representing either councilmanic, commissioner, or school board districts. District members in 12 counties, including Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Caroline, Charles, Dorchester, Harford, Howard, Prince George's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, and Worcester counties, are currently elected by the voters within each district.

Six counties, Calvert, Cecil, Garrett, Montgomery, Queen Anne's, and St. Mary's counties, have district representation on the local board, but those members are elected by the voters of the entire county. Under the bill, these counties must instead elect district members by a plurality of votes cast within each district.

Calvert County

Under current law, the Calvert County Board of Education consists of five voting members and one nonvoting student member. Of the five voting members, one must be elected from each of the three county commissioner districts and two members are elected from the county at-large.

Under the bill, voting members elected from within each of the three commissioner districts must be elected by a plurality of the votes cast within that district.

Cecil County

Under current law, the Cecil County Board of Education consists of five voting members elected from each of the five commissioner districts and one nonvoting student member.

Under the bill, the five voting members from commissioner districts must be elected by a plurality of the votes cast within that district.

Garrett County

Under current law, the Garrett County Board of Education consists of two elected members from the county at-large, three elected members from each of the three commissioner districts, and one nonvoting student member.

Under the bill, the three voting members from commissioner districts must be elected by a plurality of the votes cast within that district.

Montgomery County

Under current law, the Montgomery County Board of Education consists of two members who may reside anywhere in the county that are elected countywide, five members who

each reside in different county board of education districts that are elected countywide, and one student member.

Under the bill, the five members from each of the county board of education districts must be elected by a plurality of the votes cast within that district.

Queen Anne's County

Under current law, the Queen Anne's County Board of Education consists of one member who may reside anywhere in the county that is elected countywide, four members from each of the four commissioner districts who are elected countywide, and two nonvoting student members.

Under the bill, the four members from the four county commissioner districts must be elected by a plurality of the votes cast within that district.

St. Mary's County

Under current law, the St. Mary's County Board of Education consists of one member elected from the county at-large, four members from each of the four commissioner districts, and one nonvoting student member. Voting (nonstudent) members of the board must be elected on a general countywide ticket.

Under the bill, the four elected members from the four commissioner districts must be elected by a plurality of the votes cast within that district.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Board of Elections; Maryland State Department of Education; Calvert, Cecil, Garrett, and Queen Anne's counties; Montgomery County Public Schools; St. Mary's County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

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caw/hlb

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Appendix – Local Boards of Education Membership

The composition of the local boards of education varies with members serving three- to four-year terms. Twenty counties have elected school boards and four counties have combined appointed and elected school boards. All 24 boards have either student members or student representatives who regularly present at board meetings; however, only 8 boards allow student members to vote, which generally excludes authority to vote on matters relating to collective bargaining and personnel. Three counties with voting student members also preclude student members from voting on matters relating to operating and capital budgets. **Exhibit 1** shows the selection methods, terms of office, and membership of the 24 local school boards.

Exhibit 1 Local Boards of Education As of January 2026

School System	Number of Members	Term		Means of Selection ¹
Allegany	6	4 years	E	5 from county at large 1 student (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Anne Arundel	8	4 years	E	7 from councilmanic districts 1 student (1-year term)
Baltimore City	12	3 or 4 years	A/E	2 elected from city at large 9 appointed by mayor 1 student (1-year term)
Baltimore	12	4 years	A/E	4 appointed by Governor from county at large 7 elected from councilmanic districts 1 student (1-year term)
Calvert	6	4 years	E	2 from county at large 3 from commissioner districts 1 student (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Caroline	7	4 years	A/E	3 elected from school board districts 2 appointed by Governor from county at large 2 students (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Carroll	11	4 years	E	5 from county at large 5 commissioners <i>ex officio</i> (nonvoting) 1 student (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Cecil	6	4 years	E	5 from commissioner districts 1 student (nonvoting, 1-year term)

School System	Number of Members	Term		Means of Selection ¹
Charles	10	4 years	E	1 from county at large 8 from commissioner districts 1 student (1-year term)
Dorchester	8	4 years	E	5 from councilmanic districts 3 students (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Frederick	8	4 years	E	7 from county at large 1 student (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Garrett	6	4 years	E	2 from county at large 3 from commissioner districts 1 student (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Harford	11	4 years	A/E	6 elected from councilmanic districts 3 appointed by County Executive from county at large 1 superintendent <i>ex officio</i> (nonvoting) 1 student (1-year term)
Howard	8	4 years	E	2 from county at large 5 from councilmanic districts 1 student (1-year term)
Kent	6	4 years	E	5 from county at large 1 student (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Montgomery	8	4 years	E	2 from county at large 5 from school districts 1 student (1-year term)
Prince George's	10	4 years	E	9 from school board districts 1 student (1-year term)
Queen Anne's	7	4 years	E	1 from county at large 4 from commissioner districts 2 students (nonvoting, 1-year term)
St. Mary's	6	4 years	E	1 from county at large 4 from commissioner districts 1 student (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Somerset ²	8	4 years	E	5 from commissioner districts 3 students (nonvoting, 1-year term)

School System	Number of Members	Term	Means of Selection¹	
Talbot	9	4 years	E	7 from school board districts 2 students (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Washington ³	8	4 years	E	7 from county at large 1 student (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Wicomico ⁴	11	4 years	E	5 from councilmanic districts 2 from county at large 4 students (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Worcester	10	4 years	E	7 from commissioner districts 3 students (nonvoting, 1-year term)

¹ E = Elected and A/E = Combined appointed and elected board: (1) in Baltimore County, members are appointed by the Governor from a list of names provided by the Baltimore County School Board Nominating Commission; (2) in Caroline County, members are appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate; (3) in Baltimore City, members are appointed by the mayor from a list of names provided by the Baltimore City Public School Board Community Panel; and (4) in Harford County, members are appointed by the county executive with the advice and consent of the county council.

² Although not in statute, the Somerset County Board of Education reports that there are three nonvoting student representatives who give presentations at board meetings on current events of interest at each of the three regular high schools in the county.

³ Although not in statute, the Washington County Board of Education reports that there is a student member on the board and that the student member can only concur on votes and must abstain from certain matters.

⁴ Chapter 429 of 2025 codified at least one nonvoting student member on the Wicomico County Board of Education. The Wicomico County Board of Education includes four student representatives who give presentations at board meetings on current events of interest at each of the four high schools in the county. At each meeting, one of the four student representatives sits with the regular board members on the dais for the full meeting, while other student board members come forward to speak as needed.

Source: Sections 3-101 through 3-1405 of the Education Article; Local Boards of Education