



**Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland House of Delegates
Ways and Means Committee
March 4, 2020**



**Board of Education
of Howard County**

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**HB1422: UNFAVORABLE
Schools - Redistricting - Community Advisory Committees For Student Assignment**

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) opposes **HB1422 Schools - Redistricting - Community Advisory Committees For Student Assignment** to require counties to establish a community advisory committee during a school redistricting process.

The Howard County Public School System recently completed a comprehensive school boundary review that resulted in 5,402 students expected to attend a new school during the 2020-2021 school year. Primary objectives of the moves included relieving crowding, advancing equity by addressing the distribution of students affected by poverty across schools, and planning ahead for the impact of a new high school, scheduled to open in fall 2023.

The months-long process included multiple opportunities for public discussion and stakeholder input, including an online survey, the use of a Community Advisory Committee to advise the Superintendent, community meetings and seven public hearings following the presentation of the Superintendent's recommendation to the Board. Extensive consideration by the Board throughout the process included nine public work sessions and the receipt of approximately 8,500 pieces of testimony.

The Board understands the bill's objective of providing equity and transparency in the decision-making process. Redistricting is a difficult process that has far reaching implications for students, parents, and the community at large.

As written, however, the role of the committee required under HB1422 is unclear – they provide input to the local governing body who, in Howard County, is not directly involved in developing boundary proposals. The make-up of the committee also leaves little flexibility for participation, whereas direct testimony and public hearings as outlined above, or additional methods of input as determined by the Board for future processes, provide the public at large the opportunity to be directly responsive to the Board.

For these reasons, we urge an unfavorable report from this Committee on HB1422.