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Maryland Senate

For the record, testimony for the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
Senate Bill 382, Harford County - Board of Education - Terms of Appointed Members
March 3, 2020

OPPOSE

As a former member of the Harford County Board of Education, I was surprised to learn of Senate Bill 382 Harford County - Board of Education - Terms of Appointed Members that would do three core things:

1. Alter the requirement to appoint members to the Harford County Board of Education (BOE) from the Governor to the County Executive,
2. Require advice and consent of the Harford County Council for the appointments, and
3. Authorize the County Executive to fill a vacancy on the BOE.

The current method for composing the Board has been in use for a decade or more. It is very unfair to propose a major shift in the way the Board is elected/selected without giving the stakeholders any opportunity to be heard. I believe that most stakeholders are totally unaware of the existence of this bill. Personally, I learned of this bill about a week ago and have done all that I can to make people aware.

This is a bad bill due to the conflict of interest that arises when the County Executive who develops the budget for the BOE also appoints its members; in addition to filling the vacancies without the advice and consent of the Harford County Council. The Board of Education is an independent body. This bill could lead to the County Executive potentially having appointment authority of all 9 (6 elected who can vacate their positions) members of the Board of Education, it makes BOE members beholden to the County Executive and not to the best interest of students, parents, and community members.

Moreover, this bill alters the term of the appointed members who will be appointed within 90 days of the 2022 General Election to two years with no rationale. Additionally, confusion is created by this exception as the bill itself says on line 29 that appointed members serve for a period of 4 years beginning on July 1.

This bill lacks accountability to the public and we deserve better. If local control is the issue, you should solicit input from the stakeholders over the summer to explore and develop a process for making appointment recommendations to the Governor. This would be a better approach rather than forcing this bill down the throats of unsuspecting stakeholders. **I ask that you cast an unfavorable vote for Senate Bill 382.**

Sincerely,

Cassandra R. Beverley