

February 25, 2021

SB 785: State Board of Education Membership and Terms – Capability and Capacity Study of Education Agencies

Position: Favorable



Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

Strong Schools Maryland supports Senate Bill 785: State Board of Education Membership and Terms-Capability and Capacity Study of Education Agencies.

In 2019, the General Assembly created a workgroup intended to study the Maryland State Department of Education's (MSDE) capacity to implement the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The workgroup, led by the State Superintendent of Schools had no substantive meetings and failed to produce the required report. This is just one example of MSDE's abdication of responsibility, which we've seen more and more evidence of over the past year. The Maryland State Board of Education (SBOE) has not held the Department to meaningful account for the many missed opportunities to positively impact the lives and outcomes of public school students and school community members.

Senate Bill 785 will address many existing concerns in the education policy landscape as our public schools, students, and families are charged with recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, racial and economic oppression, and all that this heavy moment offers. The bill:

- Modifies the qualifications of SBOE members to include antiracism, educational equity, integrating schools for economic and demographic diversity, and successful leadership of public schools;
- Prioritizes SBOE leadership with expertise in issues in early childhood education, English language acquisition, special education, and innovation; and
- Rectifies the information gap critical to successful Blueprint implementation by requiring the Accountability and Implementation Board and Department of Legislative Services to secure an evaluation of the ability of state agencies to implement their required provisions of the law

Strong Schools Maryland is supportive of efforts to ensure the intended, effective implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future as well as the success of Maryland's public school students. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB785.

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