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February 23, 2021

The Honorable Arthur Ellis
302 James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401
[by e-mail arthur.ellis@senate.state.md.us]

Re: Senate Bill 749 Charles County - Board of Education - Membership Alterations

Dear Senator Ellis:

At its February 22, 2021, meeting, the Board of Education of Charles County voted to oppose Senate Bill 749. The Board's concern with the proposal was not based on opposition to all of the provisions of the bill but rather on the concern that there has not been sufficient opportunity for public input into the major changes the bill would implement.

As you know, our community has an interest in who serves on our Board of Education and how those members are chosen. Changing the current structure of the Board of Education would require extensive public input to ensure that the preferences of our parents, employees, and others are reflected in the process. We recognize that ultimately the General Assembly would make the final determination, and that the pandemic may have interfered with opportunities for community outreach, but unfortunately we are not confident that the current proposal has received sufficient public scrutiny.

The Board wants to make it clear that this opposition to Senate Bill 749 is not focused on the substance of the bill, even though there may be provisions the Board would oppose. For example, after holding a public work session in November 2020 and receiving feedback from our community, the Board had previously voted to oppose the granting of any voting rights to the student member. We recognize that other parts of Senate Bill 749 including the proposal to alter the selection process for elected Board members, may prove to be welcomed by the voters. However, we believe it is necessary to have these discussions openly and broadly, and possibly over the summer, before determining support for or specific amendments to the bill.

We look forward to working together with you and members of the Charles County Delegation, as well as the County Commissioners, to gather public feedback and potentially jointly propose legislation next session that could address the issue. We thank you for your continued support of Charles County Public Schools.

Sincerely,

Latina Wilson
Board Chair

cc: Charles County Delegation
Charles County Commissioners
Board Members