

SB 785--SBOE Membership and Terms Capability and C

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Position: FAV

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 785

State Board of Education Membership and Terms— Capability and Capacity Study of Education Agencies

Senate Health, Education, and Environmental Affairs Committee

February 25, 2021

11:00 am

Tina N. Dove, M.Ed.
Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 785, which would do a number of things, including (but not limited to): requiring the Governor to appoint qualified members to the State Board of Education who possess experience, knowledge, and expertise relative to their duties and responsibilities as members of the Board; requiring the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) to work with a consultant in conducting a capability and capacity study of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), the Maryland Higher Education Commission, the Maryland Department of Labor, and other government entities charged with the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future; and requiring the AIB to submit the findings of the study to the Governor and the General Assembly.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our 896,837 students for careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

With the enactment of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, our state is about to embark upon an historic, multifaceted implementation process—one that will involve educators across the state; various local and state elected officials and



agencies; and a significant amount of state and federal tax dollars. This is a consequential endeavor. As such, MSEA believes it should involve the implementation of processes and practices aimed at ensuring the most qualified individuals are put into decision-making positions. Further, said implementation must be informed and guided by a clear, pragmatic understanding of the capability and capacity of the major institutions and agencies involved.

We whole-heartedly support this legislation because we believe its goals and objectives meet the urgency and the significance of this moment. We were one of the largest, strongest, and most vocal advocates for the Blueprint because we believe that it is the map our state needs to guide us to the future all of our students deserve and the future we want for our state. To that end, we stand in solidarity with the bill sponsors, who along with us were members of the Kirwan Commission. We share their unequivocal desire to ensure the Blueprint's success and stand ready to support efforts we believe will aid in that success.

We urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 785.

SB 785 - State Board of Ed Reform EHEA Testimony_B

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Position: FAV



The Senate of Maryland
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401-1991

**SB 785 - State Board of Education Membership and Terms - Capability and Capacity Study of
Education Agencies**

Testimony of Senate President Bill Ferguson

On February 25, 2021

Before the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

Why This Bill Matters:

The COVID-19 pandemic and disruptions to our education system have caused an immeasurable impact on Maryland students throughout the State. Since the beginning of school building closures in March of 2020, Maryland students, parents, teachers and staff, and school district leaders have looked to the Maryland State Board of Education for clear guidance and a cohesive strategy. The State Board of Education has failed to provide that leadership.

A report authored by the Teaching Systems Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology released in April of 2020 ranked Maryland last in the country when examining guidance to local school districts from state departments of education. The impacts of the lack of leadership from the State Board of Education and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) have been felt ever since.

Although these disruptions to our education system and student outcomes were unavoidable given the circumstances, they could have been mitigated with a more effective State Board of Education composed of members possessing varied expertise in running a thorough and efficient system of free public education. Right now, the qualification requirements for nominees to serve on the State Board of Education is largely silent on that expertise. The Maryland General Assembly must fix that.

Further, as Maryland begins the hard work of implementing the Blueprint for Maryland's Future with accountability and fidelity, it is time to examine MSDE to determine if its current structure is sufficient to meet the task that the Maryland General Assembly has presented. True implementation of the Blueprint will require cross-agency coordination with strong guidance given to local school districts as they begin implementation.

If the last few months were any indication, a comprehensive study to determine necessary reforms is a vital next step.

What This Bill Does:

State Board of Education Reform

Senate Bill 785 is an emergency bill that adds a number of qualifications to membership of the State Board of Education to ensure that members have a wide range of expertise including, but not limited to: successful management of a large organization; support for students with disabilities; instructional support for multilingual students; and innovation in public education. Additionally, it mandates that the Governor make his appointments before January 1 of the year in which a member's term expires to ensure sufficient time for Senate confirmation prior to the new term beginning.

Blueprint for Maryland's Future Agency Study

Senate Bill 785 also tasks the Accountability and Implementation Board, in consultation with the Department of Legislative Services, to contract with a consultant to examine the capability and capacity of the Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Higher Education Commission, and Maryland Department of Labor to successfully do their part to implement the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. State agencies have a critical role to play in ensuring the Blueprint is applied with accountability, and we must do our part to ensure they have the structure and resources to succeed in that task.

Why You Should Vote For This Bill:

Maryland students, parents, and teachers deserve better and more consistent leadership from the State in the best of times, and certainly in the middle of a once-in-a-generation pandemic. The challenges faced by the Maryland State Board of Education and Department of Education underscore the importance of leadership with true expertise in the systems they are supposed to be running.

For our local school districts to successfully serve their student populations, our statewide education entity must have a focused vision based on experience and proficiency. The road ahead will only become more challenging as we set out to transform public education in Maryland and the General Assembly must ensure the membership, skills, and support necessary to achieve that goal.

Fundamentally, Senate Bill 785 puts the State Board of Education, MSDE, and all other related state agencies on a path to meeting and exceeding those expectations.

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 785 and I urge the committee to move this bill with a favorable report.

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April 22, 2020

**A slow start to coronavirus distance-learning
for schools in Maryland | COMMENTARY**

Baltimore Sun Editorial Board; The Baltimore Sun

April 22--If there's one thing we've learned from the novel coronavirus sweeping the globe, it's that swift action is critical to not only stem the spread of the virus, but to adequately prepare for life amid stay-home orders and business shutdowns, as well as whatever comes beyond. Americans who stockpiled toilet paper in early March, to mockery from the rest of us, for example, are rightfully smug today.

But while Maryland has largely been a leader in U.S. pandemic preparedness, forming an early team of medical advisors and declaring a state of emergency a week before the president, there's one area in which we lagged behind: the so-called "distance learning" that's supposed to stand in for our children's classroom education.

A report released earlier this month by the Teaching Systems Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology showed that Maryland was slow to offer certain guidance regarding remote education in the final days of March -- a critical time when all 50 states had shuttered public schools at least temporarily in an effort to slow the infection rate (Maryland closed its schools on March 16th). Of 21 criteria outlined in the report, "Remote Learning Guidance from State Education Agencies During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A First Look," Maryland had met only three by March 31, coming in dead last.

Texas appeared the best prepared by MIT's measures, which looked at whether remote learning guidance was available, along with key recommendations for instruction, and plans for dealing with equity and access to technology issues. That state had 17 such conditions in place at the time, followed by Massachusetts, New York and Tennessee, each with 16.

Since then, Maryland has added several criteria (up to seven out of 21), and a report author has recently warned against "inferring that an absence of guidance from a particular state on a particular issue represents an absence of concern from those state policymakers."

But coming in last in the early days raises concerns about how much catch-up we're playing now, particularly as other states make longer term plans for education. At least 39 states have made the call to officially keep their school buildings closed through the remainder of the school year, focusing completely on distance learning. Thus far, Maryland has only conceded that classes will not be held before mid-May.

That paves the way for piecemeal planning. When schools were first shuttered March 16th, they were to remain closed through March 27. That was later changed to April 24th. And last week, it was changed again to May 15th. The extensions have the feel of buying time.

In a statement issued Friday, State Superintendent of Schools Karen B. Salmon said school systems will use the weeks between now and the 15th "to examine every option and continue to develop a long-term plan for recovery." They will also submit learning plans, if they haven't already, that address the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, give a sample teacher and student day, and offer a plan of accountability and professional development for staff, along with a description of how the system will handle equity issues.

We would have expected that to be happening in earnest six weeks ago, when schools were first shuttered. Twelve states had sample syllabi in place by the end of March, according to the MIT report, and 35 had statements about digital versus non-digital learning opportunities; MIT found neither in Maryland.

We understand that online education is never going to be as good as classroom learning, particularly for kids who were struggling before now, and that there are enormous difficulties in pulling together meaningful programs at a moment's notice, especially with resources and funding in flux. But the stakes could not be higher. The Maryland General Assembly spent most of the legislative session (before it, too, was cut short) driving home the need for billions-of-dollars-worth of sweeping education reform in the state and painting a dire picture of how far behind our children already are. Those kids deserve our best efforts at every point along the way; they will not get this time back.

Superintendent Salmon seems to understand the state is in for a long transitional period, even without yet shuttering schools for the academic year. In her statement, she mentions potential "plans for additional digital learning and the recovery of any lost instructional time in the form of expanding summer school programs."

We'll take that as a sign a lesson has been learned.

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---- Index References ----

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Industry: (Coronavirus (1CV19); Healthcare (1HE06); I.T. (1IT96); I.T. Vertical Markets (1IT38); I.T. in Education (1IT61); Infectious Diseases (1IN99); Viral (1VI15))

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SB785_SBOE Membership & Capacity.pdf

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Position: FAV

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.

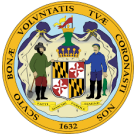
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SB 785 - SBOE FWA - State Board Membership.pdf

Uploaded by: Hands, Zachary

Position: FWA



Maryland State Board of Education

200 WEST BALTIMORE ST. / BALTIMORE, MD 21201-2595 / (410) 767-0467

February 25, 2021

Senator Paul G. Pinsky
Chair, Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee
11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Pinsky,

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) is committed to working with any and all stakeholders to employ strategies that effectively provide equitable opportunities and seek to improve outcomes for all of Maryland's nearly 900,000 students. This commitment extends to the makeup of the State Board and how it can be best constructed to meet those goals. It is within that framework that we **support** Senate Bill 785, State Board of Education Membership and Terms - Capability and Capacity Study of Education Agencies, **with proposed amendments**.

The State Board is generally supportive of the revised timelines for appointments to the State Board that would maintain the continuity of the Board with a full Board being hypothetically maintained at all times. Furthermore, the State Board holds that the outlined qualifications are vastly held by current members of the Board and there are no substantive issues with the list of qualifications outlined in the legislation. However, the Board would request that the committee consider the below adjustments, including:

1. Page 2, After Line 30: Add, "At least one member shall be a Maryland resident who possesses a broad citizen's perspective representing Maryland taxpayers."
2. Page 3, Line 3: add, "experience with mental or physical health programs or research." We believe social emotional and health instruction have a growing importance.
3. Page 3, Line 4-6: add, "or experience with implementing successful digital learning programs." We believe that COVID-19 accelerated the importance of having a viable virtual learning option for students.
4. Page 3, Line 5: add, "or innovative public or non-public school." We believe this addition would give the Board an opportunity to leverage expertise in innovative public and non-public school settings.
5. Page 3, Line 7-9: add, "experience serving on a local board of education." We have found that having local school board experience has been invaluable in our deliberations.
6. Page 3, Line 7: Reduce the number of members from two to one to accommodate the addition of the Maryland taxpayer resident.

In regards to the requirement in Senate Bill 785 that would require the newly established Accountability and Implementation Board to contract with a consultant to study the Maryland State Department of Education's (MSDE) ability to carry out its duties and to implement the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the Board does not oppose the study as it is presented in principle. In addition, the results of the study will provide important information for the new state superintendent.

However, the Board would request that the committee consider an amendment that identifies a nationally-recognized entity with the ability to carry out such a study, such as the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Having a nationally-recognized entity to conduct the study will provide the new state superintendent with stronger basis for future action. The Board would also request that the committee consider an amendment that further outlines the strategies for remediating the outcomes detailed in the final report of findings presented to the Governor and the General Assembly by the consultant that conducts the study.

Finally, the Board is concerned about the significant number of studies and reporting requirements being placed on MSDE in various pieces of prospective legislation that do not expand the capacity of the Department to provide the significant requests for information that will likely stem from such requirements in a timely manner. With this concern in mind, the Board would like to request that the committee consider these circumstances as you contemplate this and other legislation that dictate further reporting requirements for both the State Board and MSDE.

We respectfully request that you consider these proposed amendments and information as you deliberate **Senate Bill 785**. For further information, please contact Zachary Hands, at 410-767-0504, or Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,



Clarence C. Crawford
President, Maryland State Board of Education

cc: Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D., State Superintendent of Schools
Zachary Hands, MSDE Director of Government Relations