



POSITION STATEMENT

HB 624
(Ivey)

Prince George's County – Board of Education and Chief Executive Officer – Revisions

POSITION:

SUPPORT

HB 624 – *eliminates the appointed board members from the Prince George's County School Board (School Board, or the Board), and returns the Board to an all-elected governing body. All appointed members currently serving would be allowed to continue to serve until the expiration of their term. Once the terms for all appointed members have expired, the size of the Board reduces from 14 to 10, with nine elected members and one student member. The bill reduces the number of votes required for the passage of a motion to six when there is a full complement of members, including the student member voting, and five when the student member is not voting. The bill makes provisions for the handling of Board vacancies. The bill allows the elected members to select their own Chair and Vice Chair. The bill also replaces the position of Chief Executive Officer with that of a Superintendent. Additionally, the bill authorizes the Board, and not the County Executive, to select the Superintendent.*

A fundamental right that we hold dear in this country, is the right to elect our representatives. In 2013, that right was compromised by the passage of a law that gave the power to make School Board appointments, select the Board's leadership, and hire the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), to the County Executive. The result has been less than ideal, with valuable time and energy being wasted on political maneuvering, rather than being spent listening to our residents in order to better serve our youth, their families, and our communities.

The alterations made to our system were comprehensive and went beyond organizational changes to the Board. Currently the position of CEO is afforded broad authority that is nearly unfettered in running the day-to-day operations of the school system, as most decisions made by the CEO, require a two-thirds vote of all voting members of the Board in order to take an action that is contrary to an action of the CEO. This structure simply does not allow for a proper balance of power. The changes as presented in HB 624 will help temper this authority by ensuring accountability to a body of elected members.

Ours is a public school system, funded by the taxpayers who are entitled to elect their School Board representatives. And because our public school system is a public service and not a business, HB 624 will provide for the return of a County Superintendent hired by the Board and accountable to its members, and not a CEO hired by and accountable to only the County Executive.

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To provide a great education that empowers all students and contributes to thriving communities.

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Most of us will agree that accountability is undermined when our residents are not empowered to elect their representatives to govern on their behalf. Elected Board members must engage with the residents, place their decisions under a microscope for public scrutiny, and reveal their future intentions – or face removal by the people at the next election. This is as it should be in order to ensure responsiveness to the will of the people.

The current system, while well-intentioned, has simply not served the families of Prince George's County well. It is past time to set this path straight again. It is time to return the educational goals of our children back to the hands of an all-elected School Board.

For these reasons, the Prince George's County School Board **SUPPORTS HB 624** and respectfully requests your favorable consideration of our position.

Prepared by: Jennifer A. Jenkins
On behalf of Prince George's County Board of Education

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To provide a great education that empowers all students and contributes to thriving communities.

Prince George's County Public Schools