

Harford Co DCC Requests an Unfavorable Report for

Uploaded by: Carol Bruce

Position: UNF

March 24, 2022

The Honorable Paul Pinsky, Chairman
The Honorable Cheryl Kagan, Vice Chairman
Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

The Honorable Venessa Atterbeary
The Honorable Alonzo Washington
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

RE: Requesting UNFAVORABLE REPORT: SB 908 and HB 603 – Harford County Board of Education Membership

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Atterbeary; Vice-Chairman Kagan and Washington
Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

The Harford County Democratic Central Committee is opposed to any changes to the current school board, especially allowing the county executive to appoint members. County Executive appointment to the BoEdu is a conflict of interest. We are dismayed that our elected officials, with the exception of the only two Democrats in Harford, continue to push for changes that no one in the county has requested. Our school board should reflect the full range of concerns and experience of all of Harford County. We understand that a majority of the Harford County Delegation has supported this legislation, but you fail to recognize the two Delegates on the Delegation who oppose this legislation represent the most populated part of Harford County. The current hybrid Board format which includes both governor-appointed and elected members has historically provided greater diversity among Board members, from both a racial and gender perspective.

Respectfully,

Carol Bruce
Chair of the Harford County Democratic Central Committee.

HB 603-Sb 908_cpoper_unfav.pdf

Uploaded by: Cynthia Poper

Position: UNF

March 29, 2022

The Honorable Paul Pinsky, Chairman
The Honorable Cheryl Kagan, Vice Chairman
Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

The Honorable Venessa Atterberry
The Honorable Alonzo Washington
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

RE: Requesting UNFAVORABLE REPORT: SB 908 and HB 603 – Harford County Board of Education Membership

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Atterberry; Vice-Chairman Kagan and Washington
Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

Allowing the appointed members to be chosen by the County Executive is leading us to politicizing the Board of Education. It will allow the County Executive to reward and cherry pick political cronies to stack the Board of Education. Requiring five affirmative votes for these appointments from the County Council is further entrenching this same behavior. The bills' sponsors argue that having the Governor appoint members is a legacy function, which is rare in Maryland. Having a county executive appointing board members is very rare. Additionally, the current County Executive has already been accused of political retaliation when County Council members voted against one of his nominees.

Board of Education races and appointees need to be as far from traditional partisan politics as possible. There should be no political back scratching, no political pay back, and no political party loyalty called upon in the management of our schools. Allowing the County Executive to present potential appointments to the Governor, takes another step away from the local political fray. Decisions by the Board of Education need to be made not with political overtones, but in the best interests of our students and staff. Local political favors and political pressures have no part in the Board of Education.

Having the three appointed members selected by the Governor allows for the evening out of biases and allows for more diversity among the board members. It also allows for the opportunity to provide more experience from various business and industry backgrounds. Removing local politics from the selection of the three appointed members means that we have the greatest opportunity to ensure that the Board of Education represents as much diversity, across as many areas and criteria as possible, not just party, or political loyalty.

The bills come from the thought that more local control over the membership of the Board of Education is needed. Mostly this comes from a knee-jerk reaction to the various policies and operations of Harford County Public Schools during the pandemic. The policies incited an exceedingly small, loud group of citizens that did not agree with the various health and safety requirements placed on schools to protect our students and staff. Changing the way the members are selected will not change this, as the Board was unanimous in all those decisions.

The sponsors of these bills are not requesting these changes for the good of the school system, the students, or the staff. They are requesting these changes to push their own political agenda. They are not supporters of public education and have proven this by their lack of support of the Blueprint and other bills in the past. They are trying to shape the board with their ultra-conservative opinions and values and not for the betterment of our schools.

A change of this magnitude requires input from the citizens of the county. The senators have not solicited opinions from any stakeholders, have not reached out to the current Board for their opinion, nor have they allowed for public debate or alternatives to their position to be presented. In a public session held by the Delegates there were eleven speakers, and not one supported these bills. These bills were drafted without taking into consideration the varying or alternate positions on this issue throughout the county or considering alternatives. Unfavorable testimony was dismissed and not even considered by the Delegates.

For these reasons I am respectfully requesting that the committee return an unfavorable vote on Senate Bill 908 and House Bill 603.

Cynthia F. Poper
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Edgewood, MD 21040
cynpopper@gmail.com
443-243-1614

Written testimony for HB0603, 30 March 2022, v1.pd

Uploaded by: David Bauer

Position: UNF

Dear Senators,

I strongly oppose HB0603 and request that you vote against it, regardless of its local status.

Please note that every single Democrat in the Harford Delegation voted against this Harford County bill!

The argument in favor of this bill is to give “local control”, rather than having “Annapolis” decide things. As an elected member of the Harford Board of Education, I have been happy with my appointed colleagues. I have not seen any signs of influence from the Governor’s office over those he appointed.

By contrast, this bill would give the authority of appointments to the County Executive, who is far more likely than the Governor to have contact and conflicts with the Harford Board of Education. It is my understanding that only two boards of education in all of Maryland (Baltimore City and Prince George’s County) have such appointments by a single elected official.

I do not consider the provision requiring the County Council to approve the appointments to be a serious control over potential abuse by the County Executive. The current Harford County Executive has been accused of retaliation by two County Council members of his own party over their votes against one of his nominees.

In addition to, and perhaps even more important than the content of this misguided bill is the context. The context is a small but loud group of people who are angry at the school system. They are primarily angry about Covid safety measures, starting from the original school shutdown in March of 2020, and continuing with the mask mandate and other measures. To be clear, the objections are to safety measures that have been not just supported by, but sometimes ordered by the state level. For example, after an anti-mask protest in Aug 2020, the Baltimore Sun reported, “*‘People are tired of their kids wearing masks,’ [Delegate] Arikan said. ‘The board’s desire to do this does not reflect the values of our community, which is about personal liberties.’*”

At a time when Maryland is putting a lot of time, work, and funding into public education, it should be noted that six of the eight Harford Delegates voted against the Blueprint for Maryland’s future. The only members of the Harford Delegation that support our public education system voted against this bill.

If you are still considering deferring to local courtesy and passing this bill, I urge you to watch the Harford Delegation’s Feb 15th, 2022 meeting to see the reaction of the Harford community to this bill and others concerning our public school system. The author of this bill has demonstrated a clear lack of courtesy to those parties most immediately impacted by this bill; this bill deserves no courtesy.

Sincerely,
David Bauer
david.bauer.harford.md@gmail.com
443-616-3264

(References on next page)

References:

* Vote on HB0603:

<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2022RS/votes/house/0650.pdf>

* News story on Harford County Council members accusing County Executive of retaliation:

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/harford/aegis/cng-ag-county-council-directors-20201005-bx7og12cjjja7njfoxzv3gwrz4y-story.html>

* News story on anti-mask protest:

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/harford/aegis/cng-ag-boe-masks-rally-20210817-d6ghirqvdbgqdpkoymik33mef4-story.html>

* Blueprint for Maryland's Future, vote to override veto:

<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2021RS/votes/House/0009.pdf>

* Video of Harford Delegation's Feb 15, 2022 meeting:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QG9ce-6vS1E>

HB 603.Harford County Board Appointed Members-Sena

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: UNF



621 Ridgely Avenue, Suite 300, Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-5414 · 800-841-8197 · Fax: 410-841-6580 · MABE.org

BILL: House Bill 603
TITLE: Harford County Board of Education - Appointment of Members - Alterations
DATE: March 31, 2022
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes House Bill 603.

MABE has a longstanding adopted legislation position in opposition to local bills expanding initial board appointment authority to local governments. Local boards of education are entities of the State, not the county government. Because local boards are fiscally dependent on local governments, it is appropriate that local boards remain an independent voice for the school system and that a “check-and-balance” relationship continues between local boards and their respective local governments.

House Bill 603, if enacted, would make the appoint process in Harford County completely inconsistent with the authority of other local governments to appoint members of local boards of education in any other jurisdiction than in Prince George’s County and Baltimore City. Of the 14 members of the Prince George’s Board of Education, only 3 members are appointed by the local government. In addition, local governments sometimes have a role in appointing members to temporarily fill a vacancy on the board of education. MABE does not believe that these “exceptions to the rule” warrant the expansion of local government appointing authority proposed for Harford County under House Bill 603.

MABE appreciates that there is a diverse array of approaches taken in Maryland to electing appointing members of local boards of education. However, no similar board to the Harford County Board of Education currently has any comparable role for the local government in appointing members. Of Maryland’s 24 local boards of education, eighteen are comprised entirely of locally elected members; Anne Arundel County is transitioning from an all-appointed to all-elected board; the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners is appointed by the Mayor; and four hybrid boards are comprised of both appointed and elected members. Attached is MABE’s legislative position statement on appointed, elected, and hybrid boards including the status of the composition of each board.

To be clear, MABE rarely takes positions on local bills. However, this legislation is opposed by the affected local board and clearly violates the principle of local board independence articulated in MABE’s adopted legislative positions.

For these reasons, MABE urges an unfavorable report on House Bill 603.

ELECTED, APPOINTED & HYBRID BOARDS OF EDUCATION

MABE POSITIONS

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education, representing all local boards of education in Maryland:

- **Takes no position** on whether boards of education should be elected or appointed. There is no research-based evidence that either elected boards or appointed boards are more effective or accountable.
- ✗ **Opposes** bills expanding initial board appointment authority to local governments. Local boards of education are entities of the State, not the county government. Because local boards are fiscally dependent on local governments, it is appropriate that local boards remain an independent voice for the school system and that a “check-and-balance” relationship continues between local boards and their respective local governments.

BACKGROUND

Of Maryland’s 24 local boards of education, eighteen are comprised entirely of locally elected members; Anne Arundel County is transitioning from an all-appointed to all-elected board; the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners is appointed by the Mayor; and four are hybrid boards comprised of both appointed and elected members.

The following nineteen boards are elected:

Allegany County	Kent County
Anne Arundel County ¹	Montgomery County
Calvert County	Queen Anne’s County
Carroll County	St. Mary’s County
Cecil County	Somerset County
Charles County	Talbot County
Dorchester County	Washington County
Frederick County	Wicomico County
Garrett County	Worcester County
Howard County	

The following board is appointed:

Baltimore City ²

The following four boards are hybrid boards comprised of both elected and appointed members

Baltimore County ³	Harford County ⁵
Caroline County ⁴	Prince George’s County ⁶

¹ The Anne Arundel County Board began the transition in 2018 to an elected board, with staggered terms through 2024 when all members stand for election (HB 716, 2017).

² The Baltimore City Board is appointed by the Mayor of Baltimore (HB 562, 2017); and effective in the 2022 election, the Board will become a hybrid board with two additional members elected at large (HB 558, 2016).

³ The Baltimore County Board began the transition in 2015 to a hybrid board comprised of 4 appointed members and 7 members elected by district, effective in the 2018 election (SB 290, 2014).

⁴ The Caroline County Board began the transition in 2011 to a hybrid board comprised of 2 appointed and 3 elected members (SB 964, 2009).

⁵ The Harford County Board began the transition in 2010 to a hybrid board comprised of 3 appointed and 6 elected members (SB 629/HB 639, 2009).

⁶ The Prince George’s County Board was modified in 2013 to add 4 appointed members to its 9 elected members; 3 members are appointed by the County Executive and 1 by the County Council (HB 1107, 2013).

UNfavorable Position HB 603 KYork 03.30.22.pdf

Uploaded by: Katie York

Position: UNF

Name: Katie York

Position: UNfavorable

Date: 03/30/22

I oppose HB603 and any other bill to change the current Harford County school board structure, including the way in which non-elected members are appointed. Some of the county's officials, egged on by a small vocal contingent that is unhappy they are not getting their way, continue to push for changes that have not been asked for by the general community. The elected officials did not involve stakeholders such as the current board, the county's parent advisory council, PTAs, general county residents, etc. In drafting this bill. The existing Board format includes both governor-appointed and elected members. This set-up has historically provided greater diversity (in respect to gender, race, education, and professional experience) among Board members.

HB603 - UNF - MSEA, Zwerling.pdf

Uploaded by: Samantha Zwerling

Position: UNF

**Testimony in OPPOSITION to House Bill 603
Harford County Board of Education – Appointment of Members - Alterations**

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

March 31, 2022

**Samantha Zwerling
Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association strongly opposes House Bill 603 as amended, which would change the appointment process for the appointed members of the Harford County Board of Education. MSEA stands together with the Maryland Association of Boards of Education in opposition to this bill out of concern with the new precedent this bill would set.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators 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).

As per MSEA's Resolutions, which have been affirmed many times over by the MSEA Representative Assembly dating back to 1994, MSEA supports elected school boards.

“MSEA believes in elected local boards of education with boards elected by the jurisdictions they serve... MSEA further believes boards of education must be responsive to the concerns of the citizens they represent and must be held accountable for their actions....”

While we understand the goal of this legislation and the goal of some members of the Harford Delegation, MSEA is concerned about the precedent-setting nature of this bill. This bill would give the Harford County Executive outsized power in the school system, and particularly in the budget process. House Bill 603 sets up a process in which the County Executive is able to appoint members to the Board which creates the budget request for Harford County Public Schools, and then the County Executive also has the power to set the actual budget and decide what gets funded in the school system. This allows the County Executive to have two bites of the apple, and MSEA and its affiliates have opposed this concept in other jurisdictions. We believe there should be proper checks and balances in place, especially in regard to budgeting.



Further, this bill does not set out a process as to how the County Executive and County Council are to appoint these members. A process is needed to determine how to solicit applications, the criteria for how applicants will be evaluated, how long the application window will be open, and whether local stakeholders will be involved in the process. Without the process set up in state legislation granting this power, the appointment of these members to be open to political influence. At a time when our students, staff, and parents need more information and input into their local schools than ever, we are concerned that these stakeholders do not have a defined role in this process.

There are many proposals before the General Assembly to change the composition of local boards of education, and we hope you will consider each with the fidelity needed. This is an important time for education, as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and start the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

MSEA urges an unfavorable report on House Bill 603.

HB0603-UnFav Testimony POLICY FOUNDATION OF MARYLA

Uploaded by: Sarahia Benn

Position: UNF



Policy Foundation of Maryland

Committee: Ways and Means

Testimony on: [HB0603--Harford County Board of Education – Appointed Members – Alterations](#)

SPONSOR: Delegate Mike Griffiths

Organization: Policy Foundation of Maryland, MD Legislative Coalition, Voices Maryland, Prog Harford, Local 1501, Southern Harford Constituent

Person Submitting: Sarahia Benn (Executive Dir.)

Position: UNFavorable

Hearing Date: March 31, 2022

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing testimony today in opposition of HB0603. Policy Foundation of Maryland and Voices Maryland are grassroots organizations focused on State and County level legislation and policies that impact Black, Brown, marginalized, low income communities and veterans affairs. Educational legislation is of massive importance to these communities particularly due to how impacted these communities have been historically and currently. Progressive Harford County aims to bring racial, social, economic and environmental justice to Harford County, Maryland. Dion Guthrie, former County Councilman of District A, Harford County and Union leader. Southern Harford Constituent who is a grassroots activist in Education and other community issues.

HB0603's purpose is to suppress the voices of Harford Countians by altering the number of appointed members of the Harford County Board of education by reducing them from three to one. Then it completely creates a conflict of interest in the appointment procedure by moving it from the impartial Gubernatorial position to the County Executive position which has been a partisan position for decades and does not reflect the entirety of Harford County. This marginalizes the many voices all over Harford County and in particular the Southern Harford portion where a major and predominant portion of the revenues, population, and unfortunately industrialization of the area have grown. The voices continue to be marginalized through policy from the State and local levels in Harford. Much like HB0334 it makes it reflect the imbalance of the current County Council which is not representative of citizenry voices of Harford County at

all. It asks that insiders have disproportionate power to pick more insiders to represent on the Board of Education. This is clearly an out and out assault and a further marginalization of marginalized and low-income communities in Harford particularly in Southern Harford. Nothing in this policy is to achieve equity, it will provide massive inequity. Additionally, going further to stifle and dismiss the appointed member by stating they can now not represent or vote which is their intended original purpose of the appointed members which was to address that historic lack of diverse and inclusive voices on the Board.

HB0603 in 2022 is nothing short of regressive and biased Board of Education policy setting Harford County on a course backwards not forwards. The fact the current County Executive helped to create the current structure of the Board of Education to address the needs of our community and to see as a result it has started moving this area forward and now to witness these unnecessary policy attacks to marginalize the citizens of Harford specifically Southern Harford is yet a reminder that population and demographics changes continue the mass marginalization in policy in biased forms that do not represent all the citizens of Harford. This policy would lay bare an opportunity for legal challenge because of its clear inequity in policy.

Furthermore, bills like this were completely unnecessary because they are not solving a problem because the problem never existed. There is no consensus support from the voters of Harford that support moving the appointing authority from the Governor to another entity specifically because it would suppress thousands of voices. But more importantly, moving the appointment process from a position that would be transparent and be held accountable to a position that is the very definition of inequity which will impact school budgets and every important aspect of the schools and would render the voices of those in Southern Harford specifically but not exclusively, virtually mute.

For these reasons, I urge an **UNFAVORABLE REPORT** on **HB0603**.

Respectfully submitted,



Sarahia Benn
(Policy Foundation of Maryland, Maryland Legislative Coalition)

Additional organizational/Individual sign ons:

Dion F. Guthrie

(Business Manager/President Local 1501)

Zack Frink

(Progressive Harford)

JoWanda Strickland-Lucas

(Voices Maryland)

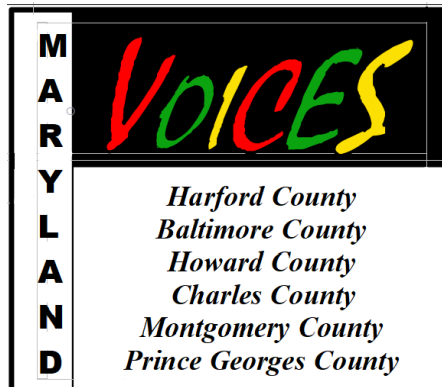
Denise Perry

Resident of District 34

(Dedicated to Women History month)

“The new dawn blooms as we free it, for there is always light if only we’re brave enough to see it, if only we are brave enough to be it.”

[Amanda Gorman](#)



UNFAVORABLE REPORT SB 908 and HB 603 .pdf

Uploaded by: Stephen Puopolo

Position: UNF

March 30th, 2022

The Honorable Paul Pinsky, Chairman

The Honorable Cheryl Kagan, Vice Chairman

Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

The Honorable Venessa Atterbeary

The Honorable Alonzo Washington

Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

RE: Requesting UNFAVORABLE REPORT: SB 908 and HB 603 – Harford County Board of Education Membership

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Atterbeary; Vice-Chairman Kagan and Washington

Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

Members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Stephen Puopolo, a constituent of Harford County, and I am urging you to reject both bills that are currently being discussed and submitted by the Harford County Delegation. As a husband and friend to teachers in Harford County, I have witnessed the actions on behalf of the Office of the County Executive in past and current administrations that have been nothing short of unsupportive of Harford County Public Schools (HCPS). In the past, the Office of the County Executive has made attempts to not honor agreements made with HCPS and as a result, teachers and support staff were forced to do without promises that were made for their contributions to the education system.

Currently, the Office of the County Executive has the power to create a budget for HCPS, which has been declared by many, including myself, to be underfunded. This has put the Harford County Board of Education in a position of finding ways to implement the budget as well as possible. By having governor appointed members, the members have provided objectivity when dealing with not only the budget but also policy. To give the Harford County Executive unilateral power to appoint school board members that may not share that same objectivity as Maryland Governor appointees will negatively impact an already delicate stability that could be prove catastrophic if there is not a proper check and balance in place.

Thank you for your time,

Stephen Puopolo

Harford County

HB603_TinaGraf_Opposed.pdf

Uploaded by: Tina Graf

Position: UNF

HB 603 Opposing

Tina M. Graf

Although I am just a high school secretary, I am typically the first stop on the tour when someone calls or visits my school. I see more than most as I field 100% of our calls. Thus, after listening to and watching the abuse of our board, Superintendent, and staff, I am writing to express my opposing view to HB603 and feel very qualified to do so. Not one of the writers of this bill has set foot in my school or attempted to support my colleagues or our students.

I have been an active participant in our BOE meetings and have attended regularly prior to and throughout the pandemic. Our current board is a mix of highly educated, diverse community members who consistently have our students and staff as their priority. I am baffled as to why anyone would want to change the election process and number. But, as it seems across the country, an exceedingly small but vocal minority has infiltrated our schools and continues to claim we are indoctrinating and abusing their children. Our board, Superintendent, Union leaders and our employees have been harassed, mocked, and their lives have been threatened by following the rules set forth at the state level during Covid. The writers and supporters of this bill have their own devious agenda in mind and have no consideration for our employees and students.

During Covid our Board initially followed our county council elected health officer, Dr. Bishai for advice. However, in October of 2021, while still amid a worldwide pandemic, our county council fired him stating they wanted to take the department in a different direction. (We remain without a health officer and our acting officer has no formal training other than a B.A. in Human Services Administration and experience as the Director of Administration of Harford County Health Department). Why would we trust our county council to have our best interests in mind when we are blindly navigating a pandemic due to these same individuals? Interestingly, the writer of HB608 is also against transparency when it comes to firing health officers and is against a bill that makes it more difficult to fire a local health officer. My trust in our local government continues to wane. To allow these people to hold such power over my school is unthinkable and negligent.

It seems abundantly obvious that our own county council is only listening to these same tyrannical community members that equate child abuse with wearing a mask. Who is listening to the employees and parents that are afraid to speak up? Our Board of Education and superintendent listen, and they do so without prejudice, basing their policy on facts, not what is forced fed to them on alternate news sources. Not one of my colleagues will join me for a board of education meeting because they are scared. We have seen The Proud Boys show up and take pictures with people who are now running for our BOE, yet we are expected to feel safe in our school environment. And our county council and president have stated publicly that they meet, pray, and convene with these same individuals that have threatened my board, my superintendent, and my co-workers.

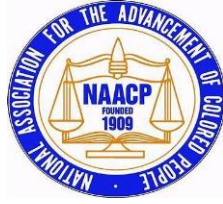
I am begging you to vote against this bill for the safety and future of Harford County Public Schools. We are already experiencing a mass exodus of employees across all levels, and it will worsen if you allow our highly biased local government to appoint members to our board. Please let our governor continue with the process, as is because it works.

Thank you.

Unfavorable Report HB 603 - Written BOE Testimony 3

Uploaded by: Vicki Jones

Position: UNF



HARFORD COUNTY NAACP - BRANCH 7019-B
P.O. Box 525, Aberdeen, MD 21001

March 29, 2022

The Honorable Paul Pinsky, Chairman
The Honorable Cheryl Kagan, Vice Chairman
Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
The Honorable Venessa Atterberry
The Honorable Alonzo Washington
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

RE: Requesting UNFAVORABLE REPORT: SB 908 and HB 603 – Harford County Board of Education Membership

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Atterberry; Vice-Chairman Kagan and Washington
Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Atterberry; Vice-Chairman Kagan and Washington
Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

The Harford County NAACP is opposed to any changes in the current school board structure, including the way in which appointments are made. We are dismayed that our elected officials continue to push for changes that have, to our knowledge, not been asked for by the community at large– the people they have been elected to serve. Especially in this county, it is imperative that our school board reflect the full range of concerns and experiences of ALL of the people. A final proposal must ensure a diverse and inclusive Harford County Board of Education that represents the increasing diversity in the county the Board will serve. The current hybrid Board format which includes both governor-appointed and elected members has historically provided greater diversity among Board members, from both a racial and gender perspective.

Respectfully,

Vicki Jones

President,
Harford County NAACP Branch 7019-B

HB603 - HCEA--FINAL.pdf

Uploaded by: Chrystie Crawford-Smick

Position: INFO



HARFORD COUNTY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION · MSEA · NEA

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Informational Testimony on House Bill 603 Harford County Board of Education— Appointment of Members—Alterations

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

March 31, 2022

Chrystie Crawford-Smick President

The Harford County Education Association (HCEA) is submitting this informational testimony regarding House Bill 603. As amended and passed by the House, this bill would alter the current appointment process for members of the Harford County Board of Education by taking this responsibility away from the Governor and giving it to the County Executive.

HCEA represents 3800 educators of Harford County Public Schools. We are the teachers, instructional assistants, secretaries, and Technicians, that make Harford County Public Schools function for our students and communities on a day-to-day basis. HCEA is an affiliate of the Maryland State Education Association and the National Education Association


At the onset, it is important to note the widespread local opposition to this proposed legislation. During the February 15th Harford County House Delegation Public Workgroup Meeting, HCEA—along with current and former leaders of the Harford County NAACP, current and former member of the Harford County Board of Education, Together We Will, and numerous other Harford County residents—voiced our concerns and our opposition to this proposed legislation. We were joined in our opposition by members of the Delegation itself.

HCEA believes this bill is both unnecessary and highly problematic. Neither HB 603 nor a similar bill introduced in the Senate (SB 908) provide guidance regarding the appointment process for the Harford County School Board. It is imperative that each member of the school board is the best candidate for the position. Every day, the 36,000 students and 5,000 employees in Harford County Public Schools depend upon and are directly impacted by the

Chrystie Crawford-Smick, President
Victoria Bridges, ESP Vice President

Doug Rudd, Treasurer
Elizabeth Jones, MSEA UniServ Director

Leigh Bondrole, Secretary
Larry Ginsburg, MSEA UniServ Director




decisions made by this body. The absence of a transparent, clearly delineated process governing how appointment decisions are to be and the lack of clear guidance upon which a process should be developed sets a dangerous precedent, the impact of which would be immeasurable and long-lasting.

It is evident that some members of the Harford County Delegation would like to extend more local control over school board appointments. Why then would they choose to not fully clarify their legislative intention by including language in the proposed legislation outlining the process by which this local control should be carried out, including substantive ways in which stakeholders should be involved in the process. As currently written, this proposed legislation would grant this new appointment power to the newly elected County Executive and permit them to set up the process independently. On its face, this is not an action rooted in local control but rather one rooted in the exclusive control of one local stakeholder. Because Harford County Public Schools receives a large portion of its funding from the local government, the absence of a proper procedure would enable the County Executive to exercise personal bias in the selection process of the very people charged with developing the school system budget explicitly meant to lie under their purview. This would eliminate any reliable system of checks and balances regarding major decisions that impact the operation of our local schools. Stakeholders must have a voice in the process.

Therefore, HCEA suggests a nominating committee to be created to ensure that a variety of stakeholders are included in the process. This idea is modeled after the Baltimore County School Board Nominating Commission. We propose a Harford County nominating committee of 13 members, including:

- 1- Harford County Chamber of Commerce
- 1- Harford County Council of PTAs
- 1- Higher Education Partner
- 1- NAACP of Harford County
- 1- Harford County Special Education Parent Advisory
- 1- Harford County Education Association
- 1- Association of Public School Administrators and Supervisors of Harford County
- 1- American Federal of State County Municipal Employees- HCPS
- 1- Association of Harford County Administrative, Technical and Supervisory Professionals
- 3 – Appointees from the County Executive



Our concerns about this proposed legislation remain. That said, we believe that the amendment we suggest would go miles toward allaying the concerns we and the stakeholders have with this bill. This would provide all stakeholders a seat at the table, while maintaining the County Executive's decision-making power.