



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

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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.