

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.**

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