

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.

