

**Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 55**  
**Baltimore County Board of Education – Retention of Counsel**  
**Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee**  
**January 19, 2022**

The Teachers Association of Baltimore County (TABC) and the Education Support Professionals of Baltimore County (ESPBC) support Senate Bill 55, which would allow the Baltimore County Board of Education to retain its own legal counsel.

TABC and ESPBC are member driven organizations of education employees from a wide variety of career classifications. We are the teachers, paraeducators, office professionals, and interpreters that make Baltimore County Public Schools function for our students and communities on a day-to-day basis. TABC and ESPBC are affiliates of the Maryland State Education Association and the National Education Association.

Under current law, the Baltimore County Board of Education is only able to retain legal counsel in “matters that involved disputes with the Baltimore County Government.” Baltimore County’s Board is the only county board of education with such limitations on its right to have its own legal representation. This bill would allow the Board to hire an independent attorney to advise the Board. This right would provide additional expertise to the Board on specialized public entity issues such as open meetings act compliance and issues of education policy. The matters boards of education face are becoming increasingly controversial and politicized, and it’s important that Baltimore County’s board has access to guidance and expertise whenever it needs it to help guide the members through these difficult issues. Further, this independent counsel could help assist with potential issues between Baltimore County Public Schools staff and the Board without the potential for conflicts of interest. Finally, with so much currently going in Baltimore County Public Schools, this would give the Board greater capacity to grapple with larger issues facing students, educators, and the community, while the BCPS attorney could manage lawsuits and questions of liability for the large and complex school system.

Senate Bill 55 would bring Baltimore County in line with all other boards of education in the state of Maryland and would help bring guidance to the Board during these difficult times.

**TABC and ESPBC urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 55.**