

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,
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(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>