



Policy Foundation of Maryland

Committee: Ways and Means

Testimony on: [HB0603--Harford County Board of Education – Appointed Members – Alterations](#)

SPONSOR: Delegate Mike Griffiths

Organization: Policy Foundation of Maryland, MD Legislative Coalition, Voices Maryland, Prog Harford, Local 1501, Southern Harford Constituent

Person Submitting: Sarahia Benn (Executive Dir.)

Position: UNFavorable

Hearing Date: March 31, 2022

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing testimony today in opposition of HB0603. Policy Foundation of Maryland and Voices Maryland are grassroots organizations focused on State and County level legislation and policies that impact Black, Brown, marginalized, low income communities and veterans affairs. Educational legislation is of massive importance to these communities particularly due to how impacted these communities have been historically and currently. Progressive Harford County aims to bring racial, social, economic and environmental justice to Harford County, Maryland. Dion Guthrie, former County Councilman of District A, Harford County and Union leader. Southern Harford Constituent who is a grassroots activist in Education and other community issues.

HB0603's purpose is to suppress the voices of Harford Countians by altering the number of appointed members of the Harford County Board of education by reducing them from three to one. Then it completely creates a conflict of interest in the appointment procedure by moving it from the impartial Gubernatorial position to the County Executive position which has been a partisan position for decades and does not reflect the entirety of Harford County. This marginalizes the many voices all over Harford County and in particular the Southern Harford portion where a major and predominant portion of the revenues, population, and unfortunately industrialization of the area have grown. The voices continue to be marginalized through policy from the State and local levels in Harford. Much like HB0334 it makes it reflect the imbalance of the current County Council which is not representative of citizenry voices of Harford County at

all. It asks that insiders have disproportionate power to pick more insiders to represent on the Board of Education. This is clearly an out and out assault and a further marginalization of marginalized and low-income communities in Harford particularly in Southern Harford. Nothing in this policy is to achieve equity, it will provide massive inequity. Additionally, going further to stifle and dismiss the appointed member by stating they can now not represent or vote which is their intended original purpose of the appointed members which was to address that historic lack of diverse and inclusive voices on the Board.

HB0603 in 2022 is nothing short of regressive and biased Board of Education policy setting Harford County on a course backwards not forwards. The fact the current County Executive helped to create the current structure of the Board of Education to address the needs of our community and to see as a result it has started moving this area forward and now to witness these unnecessary policy attacks to marginalize the citizens of Harford specifically Southern Harford is yet a reminder that population and demographics changes continue the mass marginalization in policy in biased forms that do not represent all the citizens of Harford. This policy would lay bare an opportunity for legal challenge because of its clear inequity in policy.

Furthermore, bills like this were completely unnecessary because they are not solving a problem because the problem never existed. There is no consensus support from the voters of Harford that support moving the appointing authority from the Governor to another entity specifically because it would suppress thousands of voices. But more importantly, moving the appointment process from a position that would be transparent and be held accountable to a position that is the very definition of inequity which will impact school budgets and every important aspect of the schools and would render the voices of those in Southern Harford specifically but not exclusively, virtually mute.

For these reasons, I urge an **UNFAVORABLE REPORT** on **HB0603**.

Respectfully submitted,



Sarahia Benn
(Policy Foundation of Maryland, Maryland Legislative Coalition)

Additional organizational/Individual sign ons:

Dion F. Guthrie

(Business Manager/President Local 1501)

Zack Frink

(Progressive Harford)

JoWanda Strickland-Lucas

(Voices Maryland)

Denise Perry

Resident of District 34

(Dedicated to Women History month)

“The new dawn blooms as we free it, for there is always light if only we’re brave enough to see it, if only we are brave enough to be it.”

[Amanda Gorman](#)

