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Ways and Means Committee

Subcommittees

Early Childhood

Election Law



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 28, 2022

The Honorable Shane Pendergrass, Chairman
Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee

RE: HB 668 - Removal of Health Officer: Notice to State Delegation

Dear Chairman Pendergrass and Honorable Committee Members:

Most Marylanders agree that public health should not be a political issue. Sadly, uncertainty, fear, and conflicting information wrongfully but understandably have injected political theater into policymaking.

I know that this committee is working hard to find a path forward. HB 668 adds an important element to the discussion, notification of the State delegation.

HB 668 simply requires that the State Delegation be notified of a request to terminate the employment of a County Health Officer prior to removal. HB 668, recognized the shared responsibility of public health between the State and local governments. It also underscores the fact that each Health Officer is a State employee.

I know that you have heard directly from the former Harford County Health officer about the nature of his termination. This bill does not seek to undo or pass judgment on this decision. However, current law resulted in that my fellow Harford County delegation members and I were never informed or provided the opportunity to be briefed on the circumstances of his removal.

Keeping the elected state representative in the dark is wrong. Adding us to the process shall not be construed to impact the outcome but provide transparency and renewed trust in the objectivity of decision making.

This bill is simple and easy to implement. It is however meant to enhance public trust. The fiscal note indicates that the bill's requirement can be handled with existing budget resources and makes no material affect on government operations or finances.

For these reasons, I request a favorable report on HB 612.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Mary Ann Lisanti in blue ink.
Mary Ann Lisanti