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Legislative District 44
Baltimore City and Baltimore County

—
Judicial Proceedings Committee

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Children, Youth, and Families

Ending Homelessness

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony for SB 55
Baltimore County Board of Education – Retention of Counsel
Before the Ways and Means Committee
March 24, 2022

Good afternoon Chair Atterbeary, members of the Ways and Means Committee.

Senate Bill 55, is a bill that addresses an important issue in Baltimore County: the ability of the Baltimore County Board of Education to retain legal counsel. The bill amends MD Code, Education, § 4-104 Retention of counsel by board to include Baltimore County among the other 22 counties and Baltimore City that have the ability to retain legal counsel.

SB 55 will address the need of the Baltimore County School Board to have readily available legal services. It will remove the need for it to follow current State law which requires the board to use the county attorney for legal counsel unless it's in a dispute with county government. It must also ask the county attorney for permission to hire an outside firm. Baltimore County School Board is the only board in the State with this requirement.

This bill recognizes the Baltimore County School Board, which oversees a school system ranked 23rd in the nation, with over 115,000 students and 178 schools (Niche.com/K12), need for legal services. In order to put the challenges posed by the current system in Baltimore County into perspective and to demonstrate what Baltimore County does not currently have and this bill will make possible, the following quote is from the Montgomery County Public Schools and pertains to the goals of its legal services management plan: “to facilitate cost-effective, creative, and proactive legal problem solving of the highest quality to assist the Board, the superintendent of schools, and other Montgomery County Public Schools staff to navigate legal requirements, evaluate and manage legal risk, align and conserve resources, promote collaborative dispute resolution and reduce avoidable litigation, if possible, and engage in strategic decision making to promote equity and academic excellence for all students.”

For these reasons, I ask you to vote favorably in support SB 55.