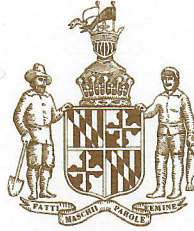


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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 28, 2022

The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary, Chairman  
Members of the Ways and Means Committee

**RE: HB 793 - County Boards of Education - Community Ombudsman**

Dear Chairman Atterbeary and Honorable Member of Ways and Means:

Most Marylanders agree that the community has an important role to play in our public schools. Sadly, the pandemic has injected political theater into educational policymaking.

Wrongfully but understandably, fear, uncertainty, and conflicting information have made many parents and caregivers feel left out of key decision-making. True to not, perception is reality.

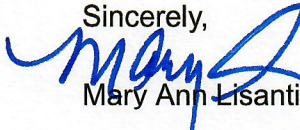
I know that this committee is working hard to find a path forward. HB 793 adds an important element to the discussion, by requiring each County Board of Education to designate a community ombudsman. The purpose is to provide a neutral party within the school system for parents, caregivers, and community members to get answers to their questions about policy and procedures.

While I know that this committee often shies away from legislating the operating requirements of our school system, this is different.

HB 793 creates a direct line of communication for the sharing of information and problem-solving. Too often this role is relegated to many people therefore inaccurate and incomplete information is provided which creates community conflict.

This bill is simple and easy to implement. Passage will enhance public trust. The fiscal note indicates that the bill's requirement can be handled with existing budget resources for those jurisdictions who choose to use existing staff

For these reasons, I request a favorable report on HB 793.

Sincerely,  
  
Mary Ann Lisanti