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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Testimony in Support of House Bill 95 - Anne Arundel County - Board of Education - Meeting Requirements and Officers

Good Afternoon Madam Chairwoman, Mr. Vice Chairman, and members of the Ways and Means Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about House Bill 95 - Anne Arundel County - Board of Education - Meeting Requirements and Officers.

In 2017, Governor Hogan signed the bill to move to a fully elected school board by 2020 with one round of elections in 2018 (which produced a hybrid board) and a second round in 2020, resulting in a now fully elected Board of Education. That transition has come with some growing pains, especially in light of a once in a generation pandemic and with an evolving understanding of an ever-changing virus, as well as a renewed enthusiasm for civic engagement.

The intent behind this legislation is to encourage more transparency, accountability, and community involvement in Anne Arundel County Board of Education meetings, as well as to make the workload for board members more manageable, and to ensure that we can recruit good, qualified members to serve in the future. With meetings often extending well past midnight, votes taken sometimes as late as 2 am, and no dedicated parliamentarian to assist with the meetings or understanding of the rules, it is clear that Anne Arundel County residents and parents do not feel heard or included in these board meetings and that board members who ran to serve in a part-time capacity with an approximate \$8000 a year stipend, no additional budget for office staff, and few additional resources while responsible for approximately half of the County budget, are being tasked with unreasonable expectations for these meetings. These meetings violate the spirit if not the letter of the Open Meetings Act.

This bill stipulates that the Anne Arundel County Board may not vote on any action after 10:00 P.M., the Board must elect a parliamentarian at its annual meeting who is to advise the members of rules, procedures, and precedents, and the Board must complete the public portion of every meeting within six (6) hours. These provisions are meant to make it easier for the public to participate, attend meetings in their entirety, stay up-to-date on Board actions, and voice their opinions on proposals, while also allowing the board members to work more efficiently, establish a more reasonable work/life balance, and set an achievable agenda. The legislation also allows for exceptions to some of these rules to maintain that the members are still able to accomplish their important work to the community. Additionally with these simple measures it is

our desire to offer some professional development opportunities to board members as well as broaden the County's future recruitment efforts.

Education is the great equalizer, one of the strongest investments we can make in the future of our children, our workforce, and our economy. I am asking this Committee to help us create a shared set of rules by which to operate that support our families, our educators, our school communities, and our Board. Thank you for your consideration of this important, local legislation. I respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 95.