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The Maryland House of Delegates
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Testimony in Support of HB 348
Baltimore County – School Board Nominating Commission – Vacancy Procedures

Testimony of Delegate Cathi Forbes
Education, Energy and the Environment
March 29, 2023

HB348 passed out of the Baltimore County House Delegation unanimously. It passed from Ways & Means, unanimously with an amendment that made it a Baltimore County Delegation bill. It passed third reading on the House 134-0.

This bill is in the same posture as it passed favorably 135-0, out of the House in 2021 as [HB468](#). An amended version passed from the Senate that same year, 47-0, but never was reviewed in the original chamber.

What this bill does

This bill sets procedures for the Baltimore County School Board Nominating Commission to fill single vacancies. Specifically, when one vacancy is being filled, this bill requires the Commission to hold an informational community meeting announcing the application process and explaining the requirements of serving on the school board, and requires that meeting to be livestreamed and archived as well as open to the public.

In addition, this bill allows the School Board Nominating Commission to reactivate the applications of previously vetted candidates, with the permission of the candidate. Each of these measures will streamline the process involved for filling a single vacancy.

History on the issue

Prior to 2018, the Board of Education of Baltimore County was made up of 11 members appointed by the Governor, and 1 student member. As a result of legislation passed in the 2014 session ([SB290](#)), a hybrid (partially elected, partially appointed) Board of Education was created. First seated after the election in 2018, the Board includes 7 elected non-partisan members, one from each of the existing councilmanic districts, 4 at-large members chosen by the Governor, and 1 student member.

The bill creating the hybrid Board also created a School Board Nominating Commission. The Commission is responsible for vetting candidates for the 4 at-large positions, and sending recommendations to the Governor to fill those positions. This Commission is made up of community members and representatives from 10 different stakeholder organizations, and each legislative district. Some of the stakeholder groups included are the Baltimore County League of Women Voters, the Baltimore County Chamber of Commerce, and the Baltimore County branch of the NAACP. Absent extraordinary circumstances, the Governor must choose the four at-large members from the names forwarded to him from the Commission.

Why this bill matters

The original bill that created the hybrid board did not address single vacancies, but rather, only the process for filling the 4 at-large positions at the beginning of the term. The recognition of need for a revised law resulted from the untimely death of Board of Education member Roger Hayden in October of 2019, which created a mid-term vacancy. With the existing language in the law, the process to fill that single vacancy took nearly 5 months.

Who benefits from this bill

The volunteer members of the School Board Nominating Commission benefit because this bill will help them to streamline their work. Eight names of fully vetted candidates were sent to our new Governor to choose the four at-large members. Allowing the four candidates who are fully vetted, but are not chosen, to remain available for filling vacancies, will ensure we don't lose qualified candidates. The people of Baltimore County also benefit, as it will allow vacancies on the Board of Education to be filled more quickly, so the Board can fulfill its responsibilities with the appropriate number of members.

Why you should vote for this bill

Issues often come up after new legislation is passed that need to be subsequently corrected. This bill will address an unforeseen problem in the original bill, to ensure that process of filling vacancies on the Baltimore County Board of Education is efficient.

I ask for a favorable report. Thank you.