



**Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate,
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 15, 2023**

**Board of Education
of Howard County**

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SB0951: FAVORABLE

Howard County – Public Campaign Financing – Board of Education

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **SB0951 Howard County – Public Campaign Financing – Board of Education** for the opportunity to create robust participation in governance of the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) through availability of public campaign funds for Board candidates.

In Howard County, the Board is composed of seven members, two of which are at-large, and a student member elected by students for a one-year term. The Board is responsible for a more than one-billion-dollar budget and sets local education policy consistent with state and federal laws governing public education. Members of the Board play a vital role in engaging student, parent, and community member voice in the oversight and management of the HCPSS. Yet candidates for the Board cannot currently take advantage of public campaign financing that is authorized for executive and legislative positions elected to provide similar representation to the citizens of Howard County.

Aiming to remedy this prohibition, SB0951 allows the governing body of Howard County to establish a system of campaign financing specific to Board elections. The system must follow existing law related to establishments of such financing.

In order to phase in the expected financial burden of public campaign financing on the County, the bill makes financing available on a staggered basis and adjusts Board member terms based on top vote getting. Specifically:

- In 2024 the two members elected from a councilmanic district with the highest percentage of votes will serve a six-year term and the three members who receive the lowest percentage of votes will serve a four-year term.
 - The councilmanic district seats for the three members with the lowest percentage of votes would then be up for election in 2028 and every four years thereafter. The councilmanic district seats for the two members with the highest percentage of votes would then be up for election in 2030 and every four years thereafter.
- In 2026 the member elected at-large with the highest number of votes will serve a six-year term, and the member with the second highest number of votes will serve a four-year term.
 - The at large seat with a four-year term will then be up for election in 2030 and every four years thereafter, and the at-large seat with a six-year term will then be up for election in 2032 and every four years thereafter.

- In the event of a tie, the local board of elections will administer a random drawing to determine the term of office for each elected member involved in the tie.

These amendments would make public financing an option for the County to initiate for Board candidates beginning in 2026. The Board supports public campaign financing as a measure often used to diversify candidate pools for elected office as well lessen the influence of large/special interest donors.

For these reasons, we urge a FAVORABLE report of SB0951 from this Committee.