

3/24/2025

Dear Members of the House Appropriations Committee,

Thank you esteemed House Delegates, my name is Mari Wepprecht, and I am a Professor of Sociology at Howard Community College, where I have had the privilege of teaching for over 10 years and I am a AFT Union member, I am testifying in favor of SB 813. Teaching and working with students is my passion, but in recent years, the challenges of this profession have significantly increased.

Many faculty members will attest that our roles have changed considerably, and unfortunately, not for the better. Rather than being able to focus solely on teaching and fostering student success, we find ourselves increasingly preoccupied with systemic issues that hinder our ability to do so. We are constantly worried about students slipping through the cracks of a system that is struggling to support them adequately.

There are many critical issues affecting our institution that I believe the Board of Trustees should be aware of. Unfortunately, the information reaching the Board is often incomplete and does not reflect the full reality of our situation. The voices of faculty, students, and staff are notably absent from discussions, which limits our ability to address these challenges effectively.

Just as at the national level, a system of checks and balances is essential for effective governance at HCC. We believe it is imperative for the legislature to become involved, as our current mechanisms for oversight are not functioning as they should. We envision HCC returning to its status as a premier institution, and we believe that the proposed bill is a crucial first step toward achieving this goal, promoting greater accountability and transparency.

To facilitate this process, we advocate for the establishment of a structured and transparent public comment process, akin to those used by the Howard County Council or School Board. By equipping the Board of Trustees with enhanced tools—such as targeted training and comprehensive access to performance metrics across all areas of the college—we can empower them to better guide and support our institution.

You have the opportunity to bring about meaningful change by supporting this bill with amendments.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mari Wepprecht