

Testimony of Rev. Dr. Robert Turner

Senior Pastor, St John Baptist Church, Columbia, Maryland
Before the House Appropriations Committee
March 26, 2025

Chairman Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Rev. Robert Turner, and I serve as the senior pastor of St John Baptist Church in Columbia, Maryland. After reviewing the latest revisions to SB 813, which address many of the concerns raised by my congregation and me, I support the amendments, have some questions, and hope this legislation does not introduce unproductive political influence at HCC.

As you move forward, I encourage this committee to consider the following questions:

1. **Board Oversight & Public Comment:** Will requiring public comments at every meeting lead to disruptions, delay decision-making, or politicize board discussions? Could a more balanced approach be considered? For example, instead of open comments at every meeting, the board could hold structured public forums at designated times, ensuring meaningful input while keeping meetings focused on governance.
2. **Employee Satisfaction Survey:** While feedback is valuable, have you considered a feedforward approach—one that not only gathers employee input but proactively drives meaningful improvements and enhances collaboration? Rather than simply measuring past satisfaction levels, could the process include structured discussions where **faculty, staff, the board, and the president** work together to co-create solutions, fostering a culture of continuous growth rather than reactive adjustments?
3. **Faculty Union Contract Reporting:** Will this semi-annual reporting requirement on union negotiations interfere with the college's ability to engage in fair, independent collective bargaining?

Finally, much of what is in this legislation could have been resolved collaboratively between elected officials, the HCC president, board president and members, and faculty, without the need for legislation. I hope that increased communication between relevant parties and a stronger spirit of partnership will reduce the need for future legislative interventions in HCC leadership and management matters.

Thank you for your time and consideration.