



Maryland Association of
Elementary School Principals

Dr. Joshua Fine's Testimony to the Maryland Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and Environment

Good afternoon, Senator Feldman, Senator Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee of the Maryland State Senate.

My name is Dr. Joshua Fine, an elementary school principal in Montgomery County, Maryland, and the President of the Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP). I am here to share the many voices of my principal colleagues to advocate for this committee to move forward bill SB0113 which will place a principal on the State Board of Education.

MAESP is a professional organization; not a union; that serves hundreds of principals across the state, supporting their leadership capacity. As the leader of this organization, I've heard a desire from my colleagues to work more closely with state leaders around policy initiatives to ensure the success of our schools and students. In this time where we are evaluating the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, I stand before you to emphasize that a principal's perspective is more crucial now than ever. It is essential to connect the policies emanating from Annapolis to the realities faced in classrooms throughout Maryland.

Principals lead diverse communities in both urban and rural settings, with a variety of cultures, languages, and family priorities. Our role as principals involves interpreting state policies and laws daily, ensuring they are executed with fidelity to provide a world-class education for all Maryland students. For example, at my school, we have benefited from state guidance and resources to promote early literacy and emphasize the science of reading, which has resulted in more of our students reading on grade level by the time they reach third grade.

Throughout my tenure as principal, we have navigated a pandemic, a shifting political landscape, and an ever-evolving public education environment. During this time, there have been instances where well-intentioned policies or initiatives from the state have been inconsistently implemented. This often occurred because there wasn't a school leader's voice at the table to discuss the practical implications of these initiatives, including identifying potential benefits and pitfalls before they were enacted.

Principals are the critical intersection of policy and educational practice. Having a principal on the State Board of Education would provide the necessary perspective to advance the work of the Blueprint and other initiatives, ultimately benefiting families and children in Maryland. Therefore, I wholeheartedly advocate for this committee to move forward with bill SB0113 to place a principal on the State Board of Education.

Together, we can ensure that our policies not only reflect our aspirations but also lead to meaningful improvements in our schools. Thank you for your time and consideration.