

## **Public Testimony in Support of SB 813 with amendments**

Dear Esteemed Senators,

I am grateful for the opportunity to express my strong support for SB 813 (HoCo 1-25) with amendments.

My name is Roberta Brown. I have been a Howard County resident since 1997 and an HCC faculty member since 2007. In addition, both of my children have either attended or are currently attending HCC as students.

Transparency and accountability are the foundation of good governance. The decisions made by the HCC's Board of Trustees directly impact students, faculty, staff, and often the entire Howard County community. Across Howard County, other public bodies—including the County Council and the Howard County Public School System Board of Education—already record and publicly share their meetings. Extending this practice to HCC's Board of Trustees is necessary to maintain consistency in public access to ALL proceedings affecting the community.

This is also a matter of accessibility and equity. Many students, faculty, and community members cannot attend meetings in person due to work schedules, family obligations, or transportation barriers. Providing meeting recordings and timely access to them ensures that all interested parties—regardless of their circumstances—can engage with and understand the decisions being made on their behalf.

This issue of transparency and accountability extends beyond meeting accessibility. Just as clear and consistent access to public discussions is essential, so too is the need for clarity in faculty evaluation and policy enforcement.

Faculty have a system of evaluation (we call it our faculty MAPs). It is time intensive, involves one on one meetings with our chair three times a year, and it requires a lengthy year-end writeup by both the faculty member and chair. It is recognized in both the faculty handbook AND in HCC's policies and procedures as to how it is supposed to tie in with merit. Last year, the policies and procedures that tie merit to evaluation were completely disregarded and merit was applied without regard to policy.

In addition, just recently, we were sent out a link to the current faculty handbook which is essentially our job description, but were also told that the most recent handbook that has been approved by administration was several years old. We need to know what document we are following—it is our job description.

Finally, I understand that HCC's Board of Trustees has recently determined that they will explore open comments, recording and posting meetings, and employing an effective anonymous survey. However, if these directives were possible already, why have they not been doing them? This further cements the need for this bill and the amendments.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Roberta Brown