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Joint Audit and Evaluation Committee
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB490: Diversifying Boards & Commissions

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Thursday, February 20, 2025 1:00 PM

Maryland has more than [650 Boards and Commissions](#) that engage more than 6,000 volunteers. Appointed by the Governor, they play a vital but often unseen role in regulating industries, shaping policies, and overseeing public institutions. These span nearly every profession and interest area, and each has its own set of bylaws.

While some statutes mandate that “members should reflect the *geographic* diversity of the State,” most do not reference *any other* form of diversity. Rather than setting unrealistic standards, [SB490](#) only requires that “to the extent practicable,” Boards and Commissions “reflect the full diversity of the State.”

Additionally, more than 15% of Marylanders are foreign-born; almost half are not yet citizens, according to a [2024 report](#) from our Comptroller. A careful review revealed that 42 Boards needlessly limit potential appointees to “citizens.” Maryland should open eligibility to any resident with expertise and a passion for service.

In summary, SB490 would expand membership criteria to reflect the full diversity of the State “to the extent practicable.” It also updates language, replacing “citizen” with “resident” or “private individual.” Given the significant role these groups play, their membership should better embody the composition of our State.

I urge a favorable report on SB490.