

AFT SB 813 Favorable (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Todd Reynolds

Position: FAV



Kenya Campbell
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SECRETARY-TREASURER

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
SB 813
Howard Community College – Board of Trustees, Meetings, and Contracts – Alterations
Ho.Co, 1-25
March 5, 2025
Favorable with Amendments**

Good afternoon Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee. AFT-Maryland is the certified bargaining representative for the full-time faculty at eight community colleges throughout the state, including the full-time faculty at Howard Community College. On their behalf, we call on this committee to issue a favorable report to SB 813, with the amendments proposed by the Howard County Senate Delegation.

The full-time faculty at Howard Community College were one of the first colleges in the state to unionize under the new collective bargaining law passed by this legislature in 2021. Despite having been certified nearly two years ago, the pace of negotiations has been slow, with the administrative team not offering any counter-proposals to the 30 proposals already being offered by the union negotiating team. Furthermore, a number of union leaders at the college have been targeted for retaliation for their protected union activities. A number of members of the schools Board of Trustees have recently quit, and replacements have yet to be named, making it that more difficult for the board to do its required work of governing the college.

This bill would help bring an extra level of needed transparency to the college by requiring proceedings of these board meetings be posted within 48 hours, as well as assure a timely appointment of replacement members to the college's board. Finally, this legislation would require Howard County Senators to receive periodic status updates on the status of contract negotiations, making sure the two sides are indeed engaging each other in good faith bargaining, and helping bring the two sides together in an agreement so as to settle much of the tension that currently exists at the school.

Again, for these reasons, we call on the committee to issue a favorable-with-amendments report for SB 813. Thank you.

SB813 TestimonyinSupport_BDushman.pdf

Uploaded by: Beth Dushman

Position: FWA

Dear Esteemed Senators, thank you for providing this opportunity to express my support for SB 813 with amendments. My name is Beth Dushman. I am an associate Professor of Physical Science at Howard Community College and I have been teaching here since 2019.

When I first started teaching at HCC, I was impressed by the collegiality and collaboration between faculty and administration, and by the shared sense of purpose to provide excellent education for Howard County students. However, over the past three years, I have been disappointed to see that partnership disintegrate and for faculty voices to be dismissed on many major initiatives, including several campus-wide reorganizations, the introduction of 7-week classes, and on HCC campus-wide committees.

While the intentions of some of these initiatives might be for the benefit of the students, the implementation has been, quite frankly, a disaster. For example, we normally have a college-wide schedule for final exams, meant to provide adequate time for exams and reasonable timing and breaks for students. Last semester, that schedule was abruptly thrown out. In the resulting chaos, faculty scrambled to rewrite exams for shorter periods or split them into two classes, and students struggled with back to back exams without a break. Furthermore, the change in scheduling increased the amount of time each class met, beyond what is prescribed by our accrediting agency. When this issue was brought to the administration, they expressed surprise and indicated that they were unaware that finals week had been removed. This is just one example of how the lack of transparency and communication between administration and faculty has real impacts on students.

Similarly, there have been huge reductions in tutoring, advising, and counseling services, making it harder for students to access these services. As faculty, we WANT our students to succeed, and having these support systems in place with clear instructions about how to access them, is crucial to our mission.

By contrast, the information presented at Board of Trustees meetings paints a much rosier picture, implying that the college is providing a wealth of tutoring, advising, and support systems for students. Increased transparency both to and from the Board of Trustees will provide a clearer sense of what is actually happening on the ground, and will allow us to better focus our time, energy, and resources on creating a better learning environment for students.

Furthermore, there is a lack of transparency in how financial decisions are made and endorsed by the Board of Trustees. At many Board of Trustees meetings, it seems that expenditures are presented and rubber-stamped, with very little or no discussion about the potential benefits and costs to the college. As faculty, we are constantly being warned that the college is running

out of funds, but HCC is hiring new administrators at ever-increasing salaries, paying for several external consultants, and funding frequent travel for the college's executive team. At the last Board of Trustees meeting, Board members congratulated the new external Human Resources consultants on their "big reveal:" that they intended to pay employees on time that week. That this was a cause for celebration is a clear indication of how much we need stronger oversight and more transparency into how decisions are made.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration, and we look forward to your support.

SB813 Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Brendan Diamond

Position: FWA

Esteemed Senators,

My name is Brendan Diamond, and I have been working at Howard Community College since 2016. Before that, I was at a community college in Tallahassee, Florida. First, I want to take a moment to thank you for your public service. As a fellow public servant, I understand the long hours and sacrifices that come with the job, and I truly appreciate your dedication. I see that same level of commitment in my faculty colleagues, who devote their lives to education. The requirements put forth in SB 813 are crucial to ensuring a quality education for our community. The bill will codify the most basic level of transparency and accountability, what had been a norm, but has been shattered under current leadership. Any prior board would have no concern abiding to these common sense provisions.

When I first joined HCC in 2016, it was apparent this was an excellent organization. When I interviewed, I was asked about what opportunities I saw in the near term, and I expressed interest in mentoring a student physics club and sharing student research more broadly. That small suggestion was supported at every level of the organization, and I had the pleasure of bringing students supported by HCC to multiple regional, state, and national conferences. I found an incredible community of educators—faculty who genuinely loved their work and went above and beyond to support students. During my time at HCC, faculty launched a peer-reviewed journal, entirely volunteer-run, supported by grants, and funded by organizations like the National Science Foundation, the WR Grace Foundation, and the Kahlert Foundation. Many of these funds went directly toward scholarships, which I helped award as the coordinator of the undergraduate research program. These scholarships provided invaluable opportunities to students who might not have otherwise had access to them.

However, in recent years under the current leadership, structural changes at the college have made it increasingly difficult to sustain these initiatives. Funding that once supported scholarships and faculty-led projects has either disappeared or become impossible to track. When I asked where those scholarship funds had gone, no one seemed to have a clear answer, yet we see administrators regularly attending leadership conferences with little to show from their travel.

At the same time, faculty working conditions have deteriorated. Uncertainty about employment from semester to semester has become the norm. Early retirements and resignations have increased, leaving gaps in mentorship and instruction. The impact of these changes isn't just felt by faculty—it directly affects students.

I have seen the profound difference that strong institutional support makes. I have worked with students like Kathleen Hamilton, who went on to become a leader in STEM at Johns Hopkins, and Goldwater Scholar Samuel Barnett, whose time at HCC shaped his path. These students, and many others, thrived because of the opportunities they had at HCC. But I worry that mismanagement and a lack of oversight are eroding those same opportunities for future students.

That is why I urge you to ensure that the Board of Trustees is properly engaged in oversight. We must bring transparency and accountability back to college spending, ensuring that resources are directed where they are needed most—toward students and faculty, not layers of unnecessary administration.

Thank you.

Brendan Diamond

Professor of Physics/Astronomy

SB813_Bridges_WrittenTestimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Karen Bridges

Position: FWA

Thank you for taking the time to read this testimony in support of SB-813. Esteemed senators, my name is Karen Bridges and I am a Howard County resident, mother of two former HCC students, professor & chair of physical sciences at HCC, and a second year Community College Presidents' Initiative fellow. I have been at HCC since 2010.

Every year, all HCC faculty and staff complete required training that's critical for remaining an informed member of the HCC community. I'm required to complete a minimum number of additional professional development hours as well: to keep my pedagogy informed, to update my understanding of available technological resources, and to learn from my colleagues across the college.

Having attended many HCC BOT meetings in the last few years, I have been surprised to observe a lack of scrutiny of the data presented by our leadership to the board of trustees. I have witnessed the blatant misrepresentation of the status of some college initiatives, and no one on the board asked a follow up question or requested testimony from anyone executing the new initiatives.

When our internal QUEST survey was abruptly changed to a non-anonymous internal survey, only one BOT member questioned the logic of doing so. He has since resigned. I have never seen a single board member question a budget item, and at the last board meeting, with **no public discussion**, the board approved an expenditure of over \$7.5 million to replace all employees in the Human Resources department with a private consulting firm based in Florida. Longtime employees, taxpaying Maryland residents, were released from their duties in what appeared to be a mass firing only a day after this expense was approved.

My point is not to diminish the important role of our board in college operations, but rather to ensure all trustees are required to complete ongoing training to refresh their understanding of their roles as gatekeepers for taxpayer investment in HCC, as overseers for the operations of the college, and as **critical** evaluators of college data, expenditures, and initiatives.

Finally, regarding the current faculty union contract negotiations, I can think of no meaningful reason why administrators or faculty would object to furnishing our board with updates on the status of these negotiations. As it stands, bargaining has been going on for just over a year with little progress, and accountability to the board from the faculty union and our self-described pro-union administration would keep everyone on track.

Recently, our administration has been talking about voluntarily incorporating some of the proposed amendments into practice. I interpret this as meaning they support the bill as well; however, as of now, I have not seen any official implementation of the amendments. I can only interpret that as showing the administration needs official guidelines like this bill will provide.

Thank you for your time and attention. I appreciate the opportunity allowing me to express my support for SB-813 with amendments.

Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Philip Vilardo

Position: FWA

Dear Esteemed Senators,

My name is Philip Vilaro and I am a Howard County resident, professor of sociology and the former Dean of the Social Science division with over thirty years of experience at the college. I am also the proud parent of a JumpStart student.

Employees have always described Howard Community College (HCC) as a great place to work, with wonderful and supportive colleagues. That, unfortunately, is no longer true. Today HCC can best be described as a hostile workplace where people live in fear of losing their jobs. Indeed, just recently our senior administration suspended or terminated the entire Human Resources department.

Were there problems in HR? Yes. For example, it took nearly eight weeks and multiple communications and resubmissions of paperwork for me to receive the tuition reimbursement I am entitled to. Many adjunct faculty have completed an entire term of instruction before receiving any payment for their labor. And this struggle to receive entitled benefits, or to be paid for teaching contracts in a timely fashion, has become routine for me and my colleagues. But why was HR a mess? Responsibility ultimately rests with the President.

The troubles in HR coincided with the arrival of Joseph Whalen, a trusted lieutenant of the presidents from Everett Community College, to head up HR and “Workforce Culture”. That workforce culture quickly became one of fear. There was a great deal of turnover in the HR department with two associate vice presidents of HR and eight other HR employees being “separated” during his tenure, resulting in a real breakdown in HR processes. Hiring, onboarding, contracts, payroll, any process involving HR soon stuttered and stumbled to a stop. And then Mr. Whalen was unceremoniously escorted off campus, bringing an end to his brief tenure as the head of HR and Workplace Culture.

I share this with you so that you can understand why I am asking you to support SB-813 including the proposed amendments. I would like to speak in support of Amendment C, requiring the opportunity for public comment at each board meeting. College and community constituency groups currently have no right to address the board about matters of public concern and this oversight potentially puts the college at considerable risk.

When senior administration fired the entire HR department, they signed a multi-year contract with Campus Works to provide HR staffing for HCC for the next five years. One entire operational area of the college was subcontracted. I'm sure that the BOT is aware of the termination of the entire HR department, and they approved the nearly \$8,000,000 contract to Campus works, but is the BOT aware of how this contract, and others like it, place the institution at risk in our approaching Middle States Reaccreditation? The reaccreditation of the college is a matter of grave concern to the board, and they should want to be informed of issues that might threaten that reaccreditation.

I bring this up because Middle States has clearly established, in its Third Party Providers Procedure, specific advice against such wholehearted outsourcing of college operations. In section III. Part H. of the procedure states that while:

The Commission is not prescriptive and does not set a threshold limit on the number of written arrangements or contracts; ..., excessive outsourcing of key business operations or functions will receive intense scrutiny. For example, the outsourcing of 100% of finance operations is considered problematic.

The current leadership of our college has embarked on an expansive outsourcing of college operations and may not have fully informed the BOT of the problems this may present for our upcoming reaccreditation. Without public comments there is no formal way for constituencies and community members to communicate these kinds of concerns to our board. And without the board being informed of the breakdown of operational processes at the college, there is no way for them to hold the President accountable. This is why we are asking you to support SB-813 as amended.

Sincerely,

Philip Vilardo, Ph.D.

2340 Daniels Road

Ellicott City, MD 21043

Public Testimony in Support of SB 813 with amendme

Uploaded by: Roberta Brown

Position: FWA

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

Support HoCo 1-25.pdf

Uploaded by: Ryna May

Position: FWA

March 3, 2025

Dear Esteemed Senators,

My name is Dr. Ryna May, and I am a Professor of Humanities at Howard Community College. I have worked at the college for 25 years, first as an adjunct and as a full-time instructor since 2006. And before I came to work at HCC, I was a student and graduated from HCC with an associate's degree in liberal arts. I have deep roots in this community where I have lived and studied and worked for almost 30 years.

I want to express my gratitude to Senator Guzzone, Senator Fry-Hester, and especially Senator Lam for meeting the moment with the introduction of this bill. I also want to thank the county delegates for this opportunity to support HoCo 1-25/SB 813 with its amendments, and I want to speak to the issue of the need for an anonymous survey outlined in one of the amendments.

HCC needs an anonymous survey, and not so employees can complain. In an [article](#) titled "Five Reasons Your Organization Needs An Anonymous Employee Feedback Program," Claire Schmidt of *Forbes* wrote that "Employee feedback programs only work if all employees are able to voice their concerns, thoughts, and reactions without fear of it having a negative effect on their status or standing at work."

We *used* to have an anonymous employee survey called Quest - we have years of historical data from this survey to demonstrate how employees feel about their working conditions at HCC. In past years, things have not always been perfect, but previous administrations were not afraid to hear disagreement and criticism. It's long been a part of the college's growth mindset to hear and address feedback. In 2022, the anonymous Quest survey was abandoned in favor of a survey designed in-house which was not only *not anonymous*, but also asked only multiple choice questions with no room for qualitative responses. Employees not only feel unsafe replying to this survey because it requires them to identify themselves, but they also feel the survey does not seek authentic feedback.

Why don't employees feel safe? The massive turnover at the college in the last 3 years has been well-documented, and while some of those employees left willingly, many of them felt compelled to leave or were terminated by an administrative posture that discourages dissent, disagreement, and perceived disloyalty to an individual or an agenda. Comments that direct dissenting individuals to "find exit signs" do not inspire confidence. In this climate, employees hesitate to say anything at all.

Anonymous surveys increase response rates (ensuring that more voices are heard), help employees feel safe from retaliation, increase employee engagement, and most importantly, giving an anonymous survey shows *that leaders care* what their employees really think. Everyone, including the board of trustees, needs to hear authentic feedback. I know the board has recently written a letter to say that they will explore open comments, recording and posting meetings, and employing (or in this case re-employing) an effective anonymous survey. But we must ask ourselves, if they could do these things (and they absolutely could if they wanted to), **why haven't they?** This further demonstrates the need for this bill and the conditions laid out in the amendments. Our number one goal is to serve students, and employees need to feel secure, valued, and supported to do that effectively. We believe HoCo 1-25/SB 813 with its original amendments can help us start to find our way back. Thank you for your time, for your support of this bill, and for this opportunity to speak.

With great respect,



SB0813_MACC_OPP.pdf

Uploaded by: Drew Jabin

Position: UNF

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 5, 2025

**SB 813 - Howard Community College - Board of Trustees, Meetings, and Contracts -
Alterations Ho. Co. 1-25**

Position: Unfavorable

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC), representing Maryland's 16 community colleges, respectfully opposes **SB 813**, which imposes governance and operational changes on the Board of Community College Trustees for Howard County. While MACC does not typically engage in single-school legislation, this bill sets a concerning precedent that could invite further legislative intervention in the governance of Maryland's community colleges statewide.

Maryland's community colleges operate under a state-local partnership model, where locally appointed trustees make governance decisions based on their institutions' unique needs. SB 813 disrupts this model by introducing state-imposed mandates for a single college, creating an uneven governance framework that could lead to different governance structures across the system. If the General Assembly begins modifying governance structures, operational policies, and leadership requirements at the institutional level, it could undermine the ability of locally appointed trustees to govern effectively and independently.

Furthermore, SB 813 is too prescriptive with board functions and contract negotiations, eroding local decision-making authority. By mandating specific board training, survey requirements, and contract renewal procedures, the bill restricts the flexibility of the Board of Trustees to govern in the best interest of the institution and its students. These types of governance decisions should be addressed holistically through systemwide higher education policy discussions—not through one-off legislation for a single institution.

While transparency and accountability are essential, legislating operational details at the state level sets a precedent that could impact all community colleges in the future. Maryland's community college system is strong because it is responsive to local workforce and student needs, and governance decisions should remain local. Accordingly, MACC urges the Committee to issue a **UNFAVORABLE** vote on **SB 813**, as written.

Please contact Brad Phillips (bphillips@mdacc.org) or Drew Jabin (djabin@mdacc.org) with questions.