

Julie C. Henn  
Elected Fifth District Board Member  
Board of Education of Baltimore County  
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Bill: SB0887 / HB1512

Title: County Boards of Education - Reappointment of Incumbent County Superintendent - Authorization

Position: **UNFAVORABLE**

Testimony Submitted As an Individual

Date: March 25, 2025

I have served on the Baltimore County Board of Education since 2016. During my tenure, I have worked with four superintendents and have participated in the hiring of three: one incumbent and two new.

I have many general concerns with the unintended consequences of this bill based on my experience. These concerns are not specific to any particular school system or superintendent, but rather to fiscal impact, school board governance, performance, and the superintendent/school board working relationship.

While PSSAM (Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland) submitted testimony in favor of this bill, MABE (Maryland Association of Boards of Education) did not take a position. MABE's legislative committee did not reach a majority opinion. This bill serves superintendents' interests and has adverse effects on board governance.

1. Fiscal Impact – I disagree with the analysis that indicates this bill has no fiscal impact. Awarding a new contract every two years reopens the contract to salary negotiations at potentially greater public expense. Additional benefits are also open for renegotiation with the potential for greater expense. Four-year renewals, particularly with fixed incremental increases, offer fiscal certainty – often at lower public expense. An incumbent has an advantageous negotiating position with two-year renewal periods given the short turnaround time to renew or find a replacement. Faced with this decision, boards are most certainly apt to coalesce to incumbent demands over beginning a tedious search process.
2. Performance Evaluation– Two years is inadequate time to evaluate a superintendent's performance to make an informed, data-driven decision as to whether to reappoint. With lagging data on student outcomes as one key performance indicator, and gradual, incremental academic progress being another, a Board cannot possibly effectively and fairly measure results over such a short time period. Student outcomes are the number one priority for our board – and should be the number one priority for all boards of education. It is why schools exist.
3. Governance – The bill does not limit the number of renewals / new four-year contracts after two-year terms, essentially, creating six-year terms. Six-year terms overlap board terms and make it harder to boards to make changes as necessary. The search / appointment process is daunting for new boards, making appointment of an incumbent an easier choice. By shortening the renewal timeframe, this could increase pressure on Boards to 'auto-renew' rather than to make thoughtful decisions with superintendent selection
4. Superintendent / Board Relationship – It potentially strains Board/Superintendent relations if a Board chooses to delay renewal - for whatever reason.
5. Performance – If placed on 'auto-renewal' at the two-year mark, with guaranteed salary renegotiations (increases), what impact does this have on superintendent performance and subsequently, school system performance?

For these reasons, I request that you OPPOSE SB0887 / HB1512.