



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 11, 2025

Testimony in Support of HB0391

Bill Title: County Boards of Education - Elections for Members Representing Specific Districts
- Alterations

Position: Favorable

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and members of the Ways and Means Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to present HB0391, County Boards of Education—Elections for Members Representing Specific Districts—Alterations, which I call the Equal Representation Act. This bill would mandate in-district voting for Board of Education races statewide, excluding at-large races.

This bill aims to bring back the power to the people when electing their Board of Education members; I in no way introduced this bill in spite of members of differing political parties but as a matter of good governance and practice. The current system of electing "district members" to the board of education, as they do at large, doesn't provide equal representation for all of our constituents living in Calvert, Cecil, Garrett, Montgomery, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, Somerset, Talbot, and Worcester counties. Instead of serving the interest of that one district, you now have board members who must appeal to the entire county, diluting the voice of individual communities. This creates a system where well-funded or widely recognized candidates have an advantage, often at the expense of hyper-local concerns.

By implementing in-district voting, we can ensure that each community has a direct say in who represents them on the Board of Education. This reform strengthens local accountability, as board members will be directly answerable to the constituents in their specific district rather than to the entire county. It aligns Board of Education elections with the same democratic principles that govern other district-based elections, such as those for county councils and ours in the statehouse.

This change fosters greater engagement from underrepresented communities by ensuring that their voices are not overshadowed by larger, more politically active areas of the counties. A more localized approach to elections will encourage candidates who are deeply familiar with their district's unique challenges and priorities, ultimately leading to more responsive and effective governance.

With that, I urge a favorable report on HB0391 to ensure that our Boards of Education elections reflect the principles of fairness, accountability, and proper representation, Thank you.