

BILL: House Bill 1252
TITLE: County Boards of Education – Appointed Members in Leadership Positions – Prohibition
HEARING DATE: March 5, 2025
POSITION: UNFAVORABLE
COMMITTEE: Ways & Means
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all the state’s local boards of education, opposes House Bill 1252, County Boards of Education – Appointed Members in Leadership Positions – Prohibition.

MABE firmly believes that the roles and responsibilities of board members—whether elected or appointed—should remain within the purview of each local board, subject to local discretion and incremental, democratically determined reforms over time.

Practically speaking, House Bill 1252 would interrupt certain boards’ abilities to function by arbitrarily restricting who may serve in leadership roles. Some local boards rely on appointed members to provide experienced leadership and ensure diversity in representation, and this prohibition would cease their ability to continue to do so.

More fundamentally, House Bill 1252 strips local jurisdictions of their ability to make democratic decisions about their governance structures. Each county has a unique board structure, developed over time through local legislative action, and this bill would override those locally determined decisions.

Appointed Board Members are Part of the Democratic Process.

Maryland has long allowed for incremental, locally developed revisions to local board of education structure that have resulted in different—but democratically-created—election and appointment structures for local boards of education. And it bears reiteration: **Appointing members is not undemocratic; members are selected through a process established by elected officials and subject to public accountability.** Appointed board members are still selected by democratically elected officials, accountable to the public through those who appoint them, and are subject to removal on the same grounds as elected members of county boards. See Md. Code Ann. Ed. Art. § 3-2B-08.

Appointed Board Members Can Bring Diversity and Representation in Leadership.

Appointed members often bring essential expertise and diverse representation to school boards. Many appointment processes explicitly set requirements to ensure certain characteristics in favor of diversity and expertise. For example:

- Baltimore City requires that appointed board members have expertise in education, business, nonprofit, and government leadership, and designates seats for parents and those with experience in special education. (Md. Code Ann. Ed. Art. § 3-108.1(h)).
- Harford County requires that appointed members reflect the gender, ethnic, and racial diversity of the county. (Md. Code Ann. Ed. Art. § 3-6A-01(d)(3)(ii)).
- Caroline County also ensures that appointed members are selected to enhance board diversity. (Md. Code Ann. Ed. Art. § 3-3A-02(a)(3)(ii)).

By prohibiting appointed members from leadership, House Bill 1252 disproportionately silences voices that were deliberately included to bring diverse perspectives to board decision-making.

MABE respectfully urges an unfavorable report on House Bill 1252. The bill weakens local governance, undermines board stability, reduces diversity in leadership, and disregards the democratic legitimacy of appointment processes.