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February 3, 2025

Chairman Williams

1st Vice-Chair Harrison

Prince George's County House Delegation

RE: Letter of Support for HB370 – Office of Integrity and Compliance

Dear Chairman Williams and Vice Chair Harrison,

On behalf of the Prince George's County Board of Education, we strongly urge your support for HB370, a necessary and measured step toward ensuring independent oversight, strengthening fiscal responsibility, and eliminating redundancies in governance. We appreciate Delegate Woods's leadership in advancing this initiative and recognize your continued commitment to fair, effective, and transparent oversight.

HB370 is A Necessary Step for Clearer, More Effective Oversight

The Office of Integrity and Compliance (OIC) was created with the intent to promote accountability and transparency. Its current placement within Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) creates an inherent conflict of interest that makes full independence and effectiveness difficult to achieve.

This bill does not replace or dismantle oversight—it enhances it by ensuring the OIC is appropriately placed within the County Government, with ultimate oversight and supervision by the County Council, ensuring it can function with true independence, accountability, and transparency.

This placement is appropriate, given that multiple agencies already provide oversight related to fraud prevention, waste management, and financial accountability, including:

- **The Office of the State Prosecutor** – Investigates and prosecutes certain critical offenses, including but not limited to misconduct in office by public officials or employees.
- **The Maryland Office of Inspector General for Education (OIGE)** – Oversees fraud, waste, and abuse in public education statewide.
- **The Maryland Office of Inspector General (OIG)** – Investigates misconduct across various government agencies, including procurement.
- **The PGCPS Internal Audit Department** – Conducts risk assessments, audits finances, and identifies areas of noncompliance within PGCPS.



These agencies already hold oversight responsibilities and HB370 ensures that governance remains complementary—eliminating inefficiencies that otherwise slow down investigations and reduce effectiveness.

Key Enhancements of HB370

✓ Oversight for Maximum Effectiveness

Some have compared this model to Montgomery County's Office of Inspector General (OIG), however, Montgomery County's OIG has jurisdiction over multiple agencies, including procurement and broader county operations. Prince George's County's OIC is school-system specific, sparking a distinct structure, necessitating effectiveness, transparency, and accountability.

✓ Enhancing Transparency and Public Trust

Public confidence in oversight depends on clear, independent reporting. HB370 establishes mechanisms to ensure that the OIC:

- Conducts regular risk assessments
- Issues public reports
- Operates with defined accountability measures

By embedding transparency at every level, HB370 strengthens community trust in governance and ensures effective oversight without internal conflicts.

✓ Strengthening Fiscal Accountability

Under the current structure, the OIC operates without structured fiscal oversight, allowing unrestricted budget requests at a time when PGCPs faces a \$37 million deficit.

HB370 ensures that the OIC's budget is subject to review and approval by the County Council, ensuring financial responsibility and accountability, while maintaining oversight by the County Council.

✗ HB370 does not weaken oversight—it strengthens it. This bill ensures that every oversight body has a clearly defined role, preventing inefficiencies while maintaining strong accountability.

✗ HB370 is not a replication of Montgomery County's system. Montgomery County's OIG oversees multiple agencies, while Prince George's County's OIC is school-specific. HB370 ensures oversight is structured to best serve our county's unique governance model.

✗ HB370 does not diminish the County Council's role—it enhances it. This bill enables the County Council to exercise transparent and structured oversight and fiscal approval of the Office, ensuring greater clarity and efficiency in governance, while removing conflicts of interest.



Conclusion: The Board of Education Seeks Your Favorable Vote

At a time when fiscal discipline, transparency, and effective governance are more important than ever, HB370 provides a clear, necessary, and strategic solution. This bill ensures that Prince George's County maintains the highest standards of accountability by eliminating redundancies, removing conflicts of interest, clarifying jurisdiction, and ensuring independent oversight (Table 1).

For these reasons, the Prince George's County Board of Education urges a favorable vote on HB370.

We thank you for your continued support and welcome further discussion. We are prepared to provide any additional information necessary to assist in advancing this bill. We look forward to continuing to partner with you to educate, advocate, and act, together.

Sincerely,
Prince George's County Board of Education