

TO: Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

BILL: Senate Bill (SB) 712 – State Board of Education – Membership – Educational Support and Administrator Members

DATE: February 21, 2025

POSITION: Letter of Information

Chair Feldman and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) would like to share the following information regarding **SB 712**, which would alter the appointment mechanism to the State Board for two current members and require the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to adopt regulations for and conduct two separate elections for an educational support and an administrator member of the State Board.

The State Board appreciates the intent of this bill to ensure that the voice and perspectives of education support professionals (ESPs) and administrators are well represented on the State Board. Both perspectives are certainly valuable to the State Board as it carries out its mission. We are fortunate to have current members of the State Board who have served in various capacities in school buildings, including as former administrators.

We have several concerns with the bill as currently drafted. Foremost is the requirement that MSDE conduct additional elections for members of the State Board of Education. MSDE currently manages one electoral process for the teacher member of the State Board. While MSDE has absorbed this administrative burden, this bill would increase the number of elections MSDE manages to three. The agency does not have the resources or expertise to manage multiple elections and we are concerned about a trend towards charging MSDE with this responsibility.

MSDE currently relies on outside vendors to host secure and equitable elections, which requires funding and staff to manage the project. For the teacher member of the State Board, MSDE is able to identify eligible voters through the state licensure system. No such system exists for ESPs. A new collection system and database would need to be developed to accomplish this task. An election for ESPs would require local education agencies to provide Personally Identifiable Information (PII) for all ESPs to ensure that eligible voters are able to participate. To contact eligible voters, MSDE must provide a vendor with the list of email addresses or telephone numbers and enough PII for the voter to verify that they are eligible during the election process.

While we appreciate the thoughtfulness of the bill to ensure a robust and representative process, we are also concerned with the increasing number of State Board members who would not be able to participate in certain matters coming to the State Board as appeals.

Additionally, we have concerns with outlining specific qualifications and appointment processes for additional members of the State Board to ensure that the Governor retains the flexibility to appoint members of the State Board who have a wide array of experiences and skill sets. As drafted, this bill would set that five of the 14 State Board members are selected through different processes than each other and the rest of the State Board. Three would be by elections of different populations within the educational community and two by limited recommendations of individuals by organizations to the Governor.

The State Board requests that the committee consider this information as it deliberates **SB 712**. Please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne, Executive Director of Government Affairs, Education Policy, and Government Relations, at Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov or at 410-767-0504 or Zach Hands, Executive Director of the State Board, at Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov or at 443-915-6094, if you would like any additional information.