



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary
Chair, House Ways and Means Committee
House Office Building – Room 130
Annapolis, MD 21401

Chair Atterbeary,

I am writing in favor of HB 129: State Board of Education - Membership - School Principal.

The State Board of Education currently consists of 14 regular members, and one student member. Among the regular members are parents, students, and teachers; however, there is no principal serving on the board. Including a principal on the State Board would create synergy between policymakers and those who directly implement education policies. This addition would foster collaboration, enhance communication and lead to better informed decisions. It is crucial that the individuals who run the schools—the principals who understand the daily challenges in every school across the state—are represented on the board. This essential voice is currently missing from the decision making process. Including a Principal aligns with the Board’s mission of engagement, equity, excellence, transformation, and accountability.¹

The HB 129: State Board of Education - Membership - School Principal aims to modify the membership of the State Board to include a school principal as a member. Specifically, the Act will require:

- Of the 14 regular members of the State Board, one must be a certified, active school principal.
- The Governor will appoint the principal member with the advice and consent of the Senate, based on the highest number of votes in an election among principals in the state.
- The Department will notify certified principals of any vacancy on the Board and conduct the election in accordance with its regulations.
- The principal member will attend and participate in executive sessions of the Board.

¹ State Board of Education Governance and Operations Manual, Maryland State Board of Education Overview (2024), <https://marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Pages/default.aspx>

This bill does not replace a current board member but ensures that when a vacancy arises, a school principal is appointed. In doing so, this change enhances representation by bringing firsthand experience from school leadership to the State Board. Principals are on the front lines of education, regularly interacting with students, teachers, and parents while implementing policies at the school level. Their insights help bridge the gap between policy making and its real world impact in schools, fostering collaboration between state decision makers and educators.

Currently, there is a disconnect in Maryland between policymakers and those implementing education policies in schools. Principals play a crucial role in interpreting and applying policies related to school safety, student achievement, and overall well being. Their expertise in addressing the diverse needs of Maryland's students—including those with disabilities, from low income backgrounds, and advanced learners—ensures that policies are equitable and effective. By incorporating a principal's perspective, the State Board can make better informed decisions that reflect the realities of school leadership, ultimately strengthening education across the state. Including a principal on the State Board aligns with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (HB 1300), which was passed in 2021 to transform public education in the state into a world class system by prioritizing equity.²

This Act will take effect July 1, 2025 and the initial term of the principal member of the State Board will begin July 1, 2026.

Thank you for your consideration, I urge a favorable report on HB 129.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Fraser-Hidalgo", written over a horizontal line.

Delegate David Fraser-Hidalgo

² What is the Blueprint for Maryland's Future?, Blueprint (2024), <https://blueprint.marylandpublicschools.org/about/>