

**Michael Butkiewicz**

**9904 Belhaven Road, Bethesda, Maryland 20817**

**Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

**SB 174 State Board of Education – Enforcement Procedures – Alteration**

**Bill Hearing Date February 4th, 2026**

**Position: Favorable**

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Michael Butkiewicz. I am an author and civic-education researcher from Montgomery County, and my work has appeared across regional outlets. I write today in support of SB 174, which establishes a 90-day deadline for State Board appeals following the removal of a local official.

This bill takes an important step toward ensuring that school leaders do not feel powerless or politically paralyzed during removal proceedings. At the same time, it is necessary to acknowledge the structural constraints embedded in the legislation. While the 90-day limit provides a measure of predictability for a removed official, the bill’s exceptions, “due process” and “public health or safety,” are drafted with significant breadth.

“Due process” can be invoked to justify extended discovery, additional testimony, or any number of procedural claims that prolong adjudication. Likewise, “public health or safety” is sufficiently expansive to encompass administrative instability, community unrest, or ongoing investigations. Without an outer boundary, these exceptions allow a State Board already inclined to slow-walk politically sensitive cases to do so without consequence, insulating the Board from public scrutiny or backlash.

This concern is heightened by the State Board’s inconsistent transparency practices. While agendas, meeting materials, and video archives are technically available, they are not easily accessible to the public. The difficulty of locating information undermines the public’s ability to observe the Board’s work and assess its legitimacy. When inefficiencies or delays occur, the resulting loss of trust is not directed at an individual member but at the institution itself.

Despite these concerns, I support SB 174, not because it resolves every structural issue, but because it represents a meaningful improvement over the status quo. In the absence of enforceable timelines, contentious cases that reach the State Board are not treated as the difficult decisions that come with public leadership. Instead, the incentive structure rewards inaction, allowing political safety to eclipse decisiveness.

***Please report favorably on SB 174.***

Thank you.