



Testimony in **OPPOSITION** of

Senate Bill 554: Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners - Appointment Process - Alterations

Senate Education Energy and the Environment Committee

Position: Oppose

March 11, 2026

Strong Schools Maryland is a network of education advocates dedicated to ensuring the full funding and faithful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The Blueprint prioritizes meaningful stakeholder engagement in decision making as a way to ensure accountability, transparency, and inclusivity in systems where voices have been historically excluded. **Although our organization focuses on state level public education policy and Blueprint implementation, we believe that this bill would set a dangerous precedent, removing the voices of labor, students, families, and community groups from local decision making process impacting our public schools.** As a result, Strong Schools Maryland urges an unfavorable vote on Senate Bill 554, which would eliminate the existing Community Panel responsible for recommending nominees for Baltimore City's Board of School Commissioners and instead vest that responsibility in the State Senate.

For years, the Community Panel in Baltimore City has reflected a deliberate and hard-won commitment to inclusive governance at the local level. Its membership brings together representatives of labor, students, parents, civil rights advocates, community organizations, and disability rights leaders. The breadth of representation is intentional and foundational to ensuring that the Board of School Commissioners reflects the diversity, lived experience, and educational expertise of the communities it serves.

This bill replaces that broad-based, subject-matter-informed body with the State Senate — a legislative body whose members, while deeply experienced in public policy, are not selected for nor required to possess specialized expertise in public education governance, special education compliance, civil rights enforcement, or the operational realities of urban school systems. Additionally, the absence of meaningful stakeholder engagement in crafting this legislation that fundamentally alters governance undermines the very transparency and accountability principles that both the Board of School Commissioners and the Blueprint is meant to uphold.

Fundamentally, this proposal shifts authority away from a balanced, community-centered process toward a purely political one. **No other school board in the state is required to obtain State Senate approval for appointed positions.** While the Senate plays an indispensable constitutional role in our state government, concentrating appointment recommendation authority in a single legislative chamber risks politicizing a process that has benefited from diverse, nonpartisan community input.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 554.

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