



PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

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March 11, 2026

Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

Senate Bill 863 - Prince George's County Special Education Service Delivery, Transparency, and Accountability Act

From: Dr. Phelton Moss, Prince George's County Public Schools Board of Education

Position: OPPOSE

Contact: Dr. Phelton Moss, Chair, Policy and Governance Committee
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Dear Chair Brian Feldman, Vice Chair Cheryl Kagan, and esteemed members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I want to acknowledge Senator Washington's advocacy on behalf of students with disabilities. As a Board member representing District 7, the well-being of every student—including those with Individualized Education Programs—is a top priority for me and for this Board.

However, I respectfully ask the committee to oppose Senate Bill 863 for the following reasons.

First, the Board of Education is already exercising its oversight role. As an elected Board member, I take my governance responsibility seriously. The Board has been actively engaged in monitoring special education service delivery and holding the administration accountable. PGcps is currently designated a high-risk grantee under IDEA, and the Board is working in close coordination with the Maryland State Department of Education on a comprehensive corrective action plan that includes staffing improvements, IEP monitoring, professional development, and regular progress reporting.

The oversight mechanisms this bill seeks to establish largely mirror work the Board is already doing. Legislating these requirements from Annapolis undermines the authority of the locally elected Board to govern its own school system.

Second, this bill diverts resources away from the students it intends to help.

PGcps staff are currently focused on executing the corrective action plan and delivering direct services to students with disabilities. Layering an additional state-mandated audit and new quarterly reporting requirements on top of existing compliance obligations will pull staff away from classrooms and into paperwork.



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As a Board member who hears directly from parents and educators in District 7, I can tell you that families want to see more services reaching their children—not more reports about the services their children are not receiving. The fiscal note estimates \$466,300 in state costs and up to \$20million in local costs. These are dollars that could be invested in hiring special educators, expanding compensatory services, and retaining qualified one-to-one aides.

Third, the unfunded mandate threatens progress already underway. The Board is already working on the Superintendent's proposed budget that includes \$27 million in additional funding for special education. We held a number of public hearings related to the town hall to ensure that community voices were a part of the decision-making process, including stakeholders in special education. This is part of our commitment to improvement. SB 863 would impose roughly \$20 million in additional unfunded costs to convert temporary aide positions to full-time employees with benefits—without providing the resources to do so.

As of March 10, 2026, all 441 authorized dedicated aide positions are filled. This bill does not solve a vacancy crisis—it creates a funding crisis. Unfunded mandates force school systems to cut other programs in order to comply, harming all students, including students with disabilities who participate in inclusive settings.

Finally, I urge the committee to trust the process that is already working. The corrective action plan under MSDE oversight is producing measurable results. The Board is committed to transparency and has supported the administration in making special education data publicly available. Rather than creating a parallel accountability structure through legislation, the General Assembly should partner with the Board and MSDE to strengthen the existing framework.

Members of the committee, I share Senator Washington's commitment to students and families in special education and his urgency to address the challenges we do have. But urgency without alignment creates confusion, not progress. Prince George's County Public Schools is doing this work. We are not asking for less accountability—we are asking for the space and the resources to deliver on the accountability that already exists.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask for an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 863.

Thank you,
Dr. Phelton Moss
Prince George's County Public Schools