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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. Robin Brown, Prince George's County Public Schools Board of Education
District 5

Position: OPPOSE

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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 on Senate Bill 863. I come before you not only as an elected member of the Prince George's County Board of Education representing District 5, but also as a parent of two honor students who attend Bowie High School and Charles H. Flowers High School. My children have walked the halls of PGCPs elementary, middle, and high schools, and I have sat in the same parent meetings, attended the same PTSO events, and had the same conversations at Booster Club that so many families in our community have. This work is personal for me.

I want to begin by affirming Senator Washington's commitment to students with disabilities and his urgency to address their needs. That urgency is something I share deeply. Through my work mentoring students with "College Bound," my experience as a substitute teacher, and my years of community advocacy in Prince George's County, I have seen firsthand what is at stake for families navigating the special education system. I hear from those families. I attend their meetings. And I carry their voices into this boardroom and into this chamber. But I must respectfully ask this committee to oppose Senate Bill 863, for the following reasons.

First, I want to recognize and celebrate the progress PGCPs has made. It would be easy, and politically convenient, to only tell a story of failure. But that would not be honest, and it would not serve our families. The truth is that Prince George's County Public Schools have been responsive, we have been accelerating our successes and addressing our deficits. We have been engaged. When PGCPs was designated a high-risk grantee under IDEA we worked hand-in-hand with the Maryland State Department of Education on a comprehensive corrective action plan that addresses staffing, IEP monitoring, professional development, and transparent progress reporting. The Superintendent's proposed budget includes \$27 million in new funding dedicated to special education, and as of March 10th, all 441 authorized dedicated aide positions are filled.



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I also want to highlight something that does not always make the news: this Board conducted public hearings specifically to bring community voices—including families of students with special needs—into the budget and planning process. As someone who has spent years organizing communities, I know that real accountability begins with listening to people. We have been listening.

Second, the Board of Education is already exercising robust oversight. The oversight structure that SB 863 seeks to create largely duplicates what the Board is already doing in partnership with MSDE. Legislating parallel structures from Annapolis does not strengthen accountability. It fragments it. It creates confusion about who is in charge and, worse, it signals to families that we do not trust the people they voted to lead their school system.

Third, this bill diverts resources away from the very students it seeks to help. The fiscal note estimates \$466,300 in state costs and up to \$20 million in unfunded local costs. That is money that could hire special educators, expand compensatory services, and retain the one-to-one aides that families in my district ask me about at every school event I attend. When I am at Bowie High School or Charles H. Flowers, parents do not ask me for more reports. They ask me for more resources to reach their children. SB 863 would mandate up to \$20 million in additional unfunded local costs to convert temporary aide positions to full-time employees with benefits - without providing any funding to do so. It is a funding crisis waiting to happen, and our most vulnerable students would pay the price.

Finally, I ask the committee to trust the community-rooted process already underway. I understand the difference between accountability that builds capacity and compliance that consumes it. The corrective action plan under MSDE oversight is the right framework. It should be strengthened, resourced, and supported—not replaced by a parallel legislative mandate that will overwhelm the very staff delivering services to children.

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

Thank you.

Dr. Robin Brown
Board Member, District 5
Prince George's County Public Schools Board of Education