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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. Zakiya Goins-McCants, Prince George's County Public Schools Board of Education District 8

Position: OPPOSE

Contact: Dr. Zakiya Goins-McCants, Board of Education District 5
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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 be transparent about who I am and why I'm here.

I grew up in Prince George's County. I was a student in these schools. I came back and taught in these schools. I've sat across the table from parents trying to navigate the special education system and felt the frustration they feel. I ran for this Board because I believed—and still believe—that our children deserve better, and that the people closest to the problem are best positioned to fix it. That is why I must respectfully ask this committee to oppose Senate Bill 863.

I share Senator Washington's sense of urgency. But urgency without the right intervention is not accountability—it's noise. And I say that as someone who has spent a career in education using data to drive real improvement. The question is not whether PGCPs should be held accountable. The question is whether this bill is the right tool to do it.

It is not.

The accountability structures SB 863 seeks to create largely duplicate work already underway. PGCPs is operating under a corrective action plan in partnership with MSDE. All 441 authorized dedicated aide positions are currently filled. The Superintendent's proposed budget includes \$27 million in new special education funding. The Board held public hearings specifically to center community voices in that process. These are not excuses—they are measurable results from a Board that is doing its job.



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What SB 863 would actually do is impose up to \$15.4 million in new local costs and divert staff time from delivering services to producing reports. As a data professional, I understand the value of transparency—but data collection for its own sake, without a plan to act on it, does not help a single child receive their IEP services. The families I talk to in District 8 are not asking for more audits. They are asking for more action.

The \$20 million in additional unfunded mandates to convert temporary aide positions to permanent roles would force us to cut programs elsewhere—affecting every student, including students with disabilities in inclusive settings. We do not have a vacancy problem. This bill would create a funding crisis.

Prince George's County is doing this work. I am on this Board to make sure we keep doing it—with rigor, with community input, and with the resources our students actually need. I ask the General Assembly to be a partner in that—not a parallel structure that undermines it.

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

Thank you.

Dr. Zaikya Goints-McCants
Board Member, District
Prince George's County Public Schools Board of Education