

Senate Education, Energy & the Environment Committee

SB 554 Education Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners - Appointment Process -

Alterations

Bill Hearing Date: March 11th, 2026

Position: Unfavorable

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

My name is Oscar Diaz, I am a senior at Baltimore Polytechnic Institute, and I serve as the Legislative Affairs Vice-Chair at the Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City (ASCBC).

I oppose SB 554, which not only removes the requirement that the Mayor meet with community groups when deciding on Board Members, but also requires the Maryland State Senate to approve them.

The Baltimore City School Board is composed of nine appointed and three elected members. Ensuring that stakeholders influence the nine appointed members, who compose three-fourths of the school board, is critically important. Currently, the Mayor must reach out to a community panel, which is composed of many different stakeholder groups such as teachers, students, and parents.

This is an important part of the process, as this is where stakeholders can give their views. From a young age, students in our education system are taught the importance of open discussion, civic participation, and engaging with the institutions that shape our communities. These values encourage students, parents, and educators to speak up, participate in public processes, and believe that their voices matter. The current school board appointment process

reflects this principle by requiring engagement with stakeholder groups before appointments are made. Removing that requirement sends the opposite message: that even when communities organize, advocate, and participate in good faith, their voices can be removed from the process with a single policy change. Maintaining structured opportunities for stakeholder engagement affirms the civic values our education system works to instill in students across Baltimore City and Maryland. Without these engagement sessions, stakeholder groups may be deprived of a say in who oversees their school system.

Also, subjecting Baltimore City School Board Members to Senate confirmation is not a substitute. No other school district has to go through this sort of regulation from above. There is a major difference between a Mayor being forced to go to his constituents for guidance on school board members, and being forced to go away from his constituents, to the State Senate, for approval on it. This will only take the process further away from the stakeholder groups that are directly affected by school board decisions.

School Districts should fulfill local needs, and stakeholder groups should have a say in their composition. The Mayor should consult stakeholder groups when he appoints a school board member, not the Maryland Senate. Therefore, we request an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 554.

Respectfully submitted,

Oscar Diaz

Legislative Affairs Vice-Chair at ASCBC

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