

**BILL:** Senate Bill 595  
**TITLE:** County Boards of Education and Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners – Vacancy Procedures – Alterations  
**HEARING DATE:** March 11, 2026  
**POSITION:** UNFAVORABLE  
**COMMITTEE:** Education, Energy, and the Environment  
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all the state’s local boards of education, **opposes Senate Bill 595, County Boards of Education and Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners – Vacancy Procedures – Alterations.**

SB 595 imposes a statewide vacancy process that has the potential to create delay, inefficiency, and disruption, while overriding democratically established local structures. The bill requires that for any board of education vacancy occurring more than 55 days before an election registration deadline, the vacant seat must be put to election at the next general election. For a board of education vacancy occurring fewer than 55 days from an election registration deadline, the board of education’s members appoint a replacement to fill the vacancy through the end of the term. Thus, in some circumstances, a vacancy would remain unfilled potentially for a year or more: between the time of a vacancy (if more than 55 days before an election registration deadline) and the time of the election itself. In other circumstances, a board would be required to complete an appointment process within 60 days. As a practical matter, this structure has the potential to produce undesirable results – significant delay in some cases, and rushed appointments for very short-term vacancies in others.

MABE recognizes the intent of this bill is to reduce partisanship from boards of education. Maryland law likewise reflects that goal, as it dictates that members of boards of education must be elected on a nonpartisan basis. See Md. Code. Ann., Elections Art. § 8-802(a)(1)(i). MABE strongly supports the principle that local boards of education should function as nonpartisan bodies focused on student outcomes and sound governance. However, addressing partisanship of local boards of education is not as simple as mandating more elections when vacancies arise, as Senate Bill 595 would do. MABE greatly appreciates the sponsor’s thoughtful engagement on this issue and the evident commitment to stakeholders as we continue to explore approaches that strengthen both school governance and nonpartisanship.

Each of Maryland’s 24 local boards of education operates under a governance structure set forth in its own section of the Education Article. These structures were developed over time through local legislation and democratic processes and reflect

different governmental arrangements of each county. As a result, board composition and election methods vary widely across the State. Some boards of education have a mix of at-large and regionally representative members. See, e.g., Charles County, Md. Code Ann., Ed. Art. § 3-501(a). Some boards have all at-large members. See., e.g., Frederick County, Md. Code. Ann., Ed. Art. § 3-5B-01(a). Others are structured such that each councilmanic district votes for its own representative on the school board. See., e.g., Dorchester County, Md. Code. Ann., Ed. Art. § 3-5A-02(b)(2). Others still are hybrid – a mix of appointed seats and elected seats; and boards have many different ways to fill vacancies.

These differing governance structures illustrate that there is no uniform electoral design that reliably prevents partisanship. Depending on the community, at-large elections, district-based (either councilmanic or separately drawn) elections, or hybrid systems with appointments and elections may each be viewed as promoting true representation of the community and driving local accountability. While board elections are formally nonpartisan, the practical reality is that elections can be (and sometimes still are) partisan in tone or effect regardless of the model used. The same is true for vacancies. The point being that mandating elections for vacancies does not necessarily advance the nonpartisan objective that the bill seeks to achieve.

Because board governance structures (and the election, appointment, and vacancy considerations of each board) were created through local legislative processes, MABE is concerned that applying a uniform voting requirement (or short-term internal appointments) to fill vacancies will not reduce or eliminate partisanship but will introduce mandated statewide policy on 24 governance structures each built and chosen differently than the others.

**For these reasons, MABE opposes Senate Bill 595 and respectfully requests an unfavorable report.**