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March 9, 2026

Maryland Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

c/o Chair Brian Feldman and Vice Chair Cheryl Kagan
senate.education@senate.state.md.us

Subject: Opposition to SB508 – Somerset County Board of Education

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

As a **former special education teacher and certificated parent educator living in Somerset County**, I am deeply concerned about the governance and financial oversight of our public school system. Because these decisions directly affect the educational stability and resources available to our students, I am writing to respectfully urge the committee to reject **Senate Bill 508**, which proposes significant governance changes to the **Somerset County Board of Education**.

Recent reporting has revealed a nearly **\$20 million discrepancy** between the budget approved by county commissioners and the “actual total budget” later cited by the Board of Education, raising serious concerns about fiscal transparency and the responsible stewardship of taxpayer funds. That discrepancy has triggered a recommendation of a **forensic audit despite its expected cost to taxpayers of up to \$500,000**, simply to determine how public funds are being tracked and reported. At the same time, state audits have documented longstanding financial management failures within the district, including weak purchasing oversight and unsupported vendor payments that have persisted for more than a decade.

State officials have also warned that board actions could jeopardize **more than \$10 million in grant funding** for Somerset County students. Additionally, the district has struggled to meet required state education funding benchmarks under the **Blueprint for Maryland’s Future**.

Against this backdrop, **SB508 proposes several governance changes that would weaken accountability rather than strengthen it**.

Most concerning, the bill would allow the Board of Education to take actions during executive session. Public education decisions should be made transparently. Allowing final actions to occur behind closed doors would significantly reduce public oversight at a time when the community is already demanding answers about how school funds are being managed.

The bill would also shift the authority to fill Board of Education vacancies from the **Governor of Maryland** to the **Somerset County Commissioners**, concentrating political influence locally and removing an important layer of independent oversight.

Finally, the bill increases board compensation and establishes a **\$5,000 scholarship tied to student board service**, while the district continues to face unresolved budget disputes and significant financial management concerns.

Somerset County's students deserve stability, transparency, and responsible stewardship of public funds. This legislation does the opposite: it reduces transparency, concentrates political power, and expands compensation while serious financial questions remain unanswered.

Until financial discrepancies are resolved and governance concerns are fully addressed, enacting SB508 would be a step backward for accountability, transparency, and the students Somerset County is meant to serve.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to **reject Senate Bill 508**.

Sincerely,

Sharyn Yuloff

Princess Anne, MD