



Empowering People to Lead Systemic Change
The Protection and Advocacy System for the State of Maryland

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EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

**SENATE BILL 554: Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners - Appointment Process -
Alterations**

March 11, 2026

POSITION: OPPOSE

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM), a non-profit legal advocacy organization, is the federally-mandated Protection and Advocacy agency for the State of Maryland, charged with defending and advancing the rights of individuals with disabilities. Over the past 40 years, DRM has dedicated significant resources to representation of children with disabilities in special education matters, both individual and systemic, and to educational policy work. This work includes the 1984 systemic reform lawsuit, *Vaughn G.*, filed on behalf of students with disabilities in Baltimore City. DRM respectfully opposes SB 554 which would replace community input in the Baltimore City School board appointment process with a Senate confirmation process not required in any other jurisdiction.

DRM's decades-long work on *Vaughn G.* led to the governor's involvement in the school board appointment process beginning in 1997. When this oversight was deemed unnecessary in 2017 and replaced the community panel process, DRM was included as a member of the community panel. DRM has firsthand knowledge of the value of the panel, which is tasked with ensuring that the candidates sent for consideration by the mayor meet the minimum qualifications for the positions open at the time. The process is conducted during open meetings and is fully transparent. Since Baltimore City residents have fewer opportunities to elect board members than their fellow Marylanders, the community panel provides a necessary opportunity for stakeholder input on the board's composition. With regard to the proposed Senate confirmation for mayoral appointments, no other Maryland county's board appointment process requires senate approval and, unlike the governor's involvement in 1997, no policy reasons exist to justify this Senate confirmation process now.

Baltimore City community members deserve a continued voice in the school board appointment process and there is no policy reason to justify imposing a Senate confirmation process on Baltimore City school board appointments. DRM respectfully opposes SB 554.

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