

**SB 508 - Carozza Testimony\_FINAL.pdf**

Uploaded by: Mary Beth Carozza

Position: FAV

**MARY BETH CAROZZA**  
*Legislative District 38*  
Somerset, Wicomico,  
and Worcester Counties

Education, Energy, and  
the Environment Committee

Executive Nominations Committee



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**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
**ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401**

**March 11, 2026**

**The Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee**  
**SB 508 – Somerset County Board of Education - Alterations**  
**Statement of Support by Bill Sponsor Senator Mary Beth Carozza**

Thank you Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and my fellow members of the distinguished Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee for this opportunity to present Senate Bill 508 – Somerset County Board of Education - Alterations as amended and ask for a favorable report.

This local bill would update Maryland statute regarding several processes of the Somerset County Board of Education, with the most urgent to bring the Board into compliance with the Open Meetings Act and to clarify the County Board may take actions in executive session in accordance with the Open Meetings Act.

Following an audit completed by Inspector General Richard Henry on November 19, 2025, the Somerset County Board of Education was found to be out of compliance with the Maryland Education Article, Subtitle 12, Section §3-1204, which pertains to Somerset County only. The Somerset County Board of Education is committed to adhering to all applicable laws and statutory obligations.

However, Section §3-1204, which states that “All final actions of the county board shall be taken at a public meeting” has led to confusion about which actions the Somerset County Board of Education can and cannot take in executive session, unlike the clear and specific language in the Open Meetings Act.

This emergency legislation would provide immediate clarity in statute that the Somerset County Board of Education must comply with the Open Meetings Act only, which would allow the Board to promptly proceed with important functions, such as engaging in collective bargaining with the Maryland Teachers Association, voting on matters subject to attorney-client privilege, and engaging in disclosures on personnel matters and student discipline.

This local bill also would allow the County Commissioners of Somerset County to appoint a qualified individual to fill any vacancy on the board for the remainder of the term and until a successor is elected and qualifies. Fourteen other Maryland counties allow the appointment of a local board of education member by the county commission or county council.

In addition, SB 508 creates the statutory authority to add two student board members, one from each public high school in Somerset County to the Somerset County Board of Education. The bill has been amended at the request of the Somerset County Board of Education and to be identical to the House cross file, HB 1524, to give the Board flexibility and discretion in the awarding of scholarships to student board of education members. SB 508 also adjusts the compensation for the Somerset County Board of Education members to correspond with other local boards.

I thank you for your kind attention and consideration, and I respectfully request a favorable and very swift report on SB 508.

# **Senate Delegation Support - SB 508.pdf**

Uploaded by: Mary Beth Carozza

Position: FAV

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Somerset, Wicomico,  
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 11, 2026

The Honorable Brian Feldman  
Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee  
2 West  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Feldman,

The Somerset County Delegation supports Senate Bill 508 – Somerset County Board of Education - Alterations. I thank you for your committee's consideration of this bill and request a favorable report.

In Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Beth Carozza".

MARY BETH CAROZZA  
State Senator – District 38  
Somerset, Worcester, and Wicomico

# **BOE Statement before the GA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Tanavia Anthony

Position: FAV

# Somerset County Public Schools

**W.David Bromwell**  
Superintendent of Schools  
**Tracie Bartemy**  
Director of Schools



**Board Members**  
**Matthew Lankford**, Chairman  
**Andrew Gleason**, Vice Chairman  
**Mary Beth Bozman**  
**William McInturff**  
**John Robertson**

General Assembly  
LEGISLATIVE SESSION 2026  
Subtitle 12 AMENDMENTS

## ON BEHALF OF THE SOMERSET COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Dear Members,

Somerset County (SC) is the only county in Maryland which has not had regular, ordinary and customary updates to its Subtitle 12 of the Maryland Education Article. Somerset County Board of Education has 5 voting members. Maryland Blueprint brought many changes and finally SCBOE has an opportunity to update old subsections of Subtitle 12 accordingly.

This subtitle has only 4 subtitles:

- 1) 3-1201 Membership
- 2) 3-1202 Chairman
- 3) 3-1203 Compensation and expenses
- 4) 3-1204 Meetings

### **3-1201. Membership**

Most subsections of the Somerset County Education Article, Subtitle 12 have not been updated since 1996.

Since 1996 most Maryland counties incorporated into their education article presence, participation, attendance and roles of selected Student Board Representatives.

Somerset County had student representatives sitting, preparing and attending our meetings but they are not even mentioned in the Subtitle 12 and technically without statutory authority to attend regular board meetings.

The proposed change is the local Board's desire to recognize Student Representatives attending our meetings. To remedy this omission, SCBOE wishes to incorporate Student Representatives as Board Advisors and reference them as such into the subsection 3-1201 to comply and conform with all other neighboring Eastern Shore counties who updated their Subtitles over 20 years ago.

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**John Robertson**

Furthermore, Somerset County recognizes wisdom in the Subtitle 14 of the Maryland Education Article of the neighboring Worcester County specifically their section 3-1401(g) Vacancies and wishes to incorporate the same statutory language to wit: 3-1401(g)(1) The county commissioners shall appoint a new member to fill any vacancy on the county board of education for the remainder of that term and until a successor is elected and qualifies; (2) A resident of the district in which a vacancy exists may apply to the county commissioners to fill the vacancy.

This language would ensure local commissioners' continued involvement, efficiency and cooperation with the local Board of Education. In a small county like Somerset or Worcester, most commissioners know best suitable candidates who could fill the vacancies swiftly and would ensure operations of the Board without due delay. In 2025 one of our Board members, Mr. Ford resigned in April and his vacancy (currently within authority of the Governor) has not been filled since November 2025. From April through November, we had 4 members and often have difficulty in obtaining majority. To avoid such and similar disruptions, our desire is to defer the appointment of vacancies to our local Commissioners.

### **3-1203. Compensation and expenses**

This subsection has not been updated since 1998.

Somerset County is the poorest county in Maryland. Its current compensation for the Board members is \$2700 per year and for the Chairperson \$3000 per year.

Somerset County Board of Education should be equalized with all other local Eastern Shore counties as far as the stipend to the Board members for the basic purposes of respect for the office and public school education.

Proposed legislation is only \$5,000 per year for the members and \$6,000 for the Chairperson.

### **3-1204. Meetings.**

This section has not been reviewed since 1996.

Under current section of Maryland Education Article §3-1204 the Somerset County Board of Education is unable to lawfully conclude their executive session without violating Maryland Education law.

Specifically, §3-1204 states that:

# Somerset County Public Schools

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- (a) “all final actions of the county board shall be taken at a public meeting. The board shall keep a formal record of each public meeting and
- b) Executive session – this section does not prohibit the board from meeting and deliberating in executive session **provided that all action is taken at a public meeting.** (1979, ch.567, §2; 1996, ch 10, §16).

The Board must vote to enter into the executive closed session and to conclude their meeting and go to the public open session. However, the Board is unable to vote in the executive closed session under this subsection since **all final actions** taken have to be taken at a public meeting. This technicality has always been overlooked until recently.

## **§3-1204 of Subtitle 12 Somerset County is inconsistent with Maryland Open Meetings Act**

Open Meetings Act provides rules of parliamentary procedure and affords certain limited and enumerated exceptions under General Provisions §3-305. Somerset County Board of Education has not violated Maryland Open Meetings Act and the Attorney General for Open Meetings Act Compliance Board issued numerous well written decisions explaining requirements for compliance.

However, §3-1204 does not allow the Board to take final action and vote in closed session for any reason, including but not limited to confidential matters with their attorney such as: offers to settle disputes, counter offers, strategic decisions regarding Labor Union negotiations etc. Somerset County Board of Education cannot enter, debate and vote based on recommendation of their attorney on any confidential matter. Furthermore, Somerset County cannot discuss and vote in closed session for the Labor Negotiations, terminations of specific employees which would bring their names into public light or public scorn. Enumerated exceptions under Open Meetings Act are currently not available for Somerset County. We are the only public body in Maryland that cannot follow Maryland Open Meetings Act as written because by doing so we would be in violation of provision 3-1204 of Maryland Education Article.

For an example: the language in the similar section for Talbot County (§3-12A-05) states:

- (a) In general – the County board shall meet at least once each month
- (b) Actions to be public: - Except for those actions authorized by subsection (c) of this section, all actions of the county board shall be taken at a public meeting and a record of the meeting and all actions shall be made public;
- (c) **Executive session – The County Board may take actions in executive session in accordance with §3-305 of the General Provisions Article (2005.ch.524 §4;2014,ch.104, §2).**

# Somerset County Public Schools

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Superintendent of Schools  
**Tracie Bartemy**  
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The same language is found in Worcester County §3-1405. Meetings

- (a) Frequency – The county board shall meet at least once each month
- (b) Actions to be public – Except for those actions authorized by subsection (c) of this section, all actions of the county board shall be taken at a public meeting and a record of the meeting and all actions shall be made public.
- (c) Executive session – The county board may take actions in executive session in accordance with §10-508 of the State Government Article.

Queen Anne’s County Education Article does not have a similar section and Queen Anne County school board meetings are governed under the General Provisions Article – Open Meetings Act.

Somerset County Board of Education wishes to remedy this inconsistency with the Maryland Open Meetings Act and amend their section 3-1204 to comply with Maryland Open Meetings Act.

Somerset County Board of Education wishes to extend gratitude to all members of the Maryland General Assembly who are instrumental in fixing archaic and inconsistent subsections.

With this testimony we are remedying a long overdue obligation to fix Somerset County Public School system in all areas: Our gratitude goes to our students, parents, Maryland Board of Education, Maryland State Superintendent Dr. Wright and our new Superintendent Mr. Bromwell who have supported these efforts refresh, update and improve our current legal framework.

We are especially grateful to Senator Mary Beth Carozza and Delegate Kevin Anderson for bringing this issue to light and before the Maryland General Assembly.

Respectfully,

Mathew Lankford, Chairman  
Andrew Gleason, Vice Chairman

# **Testimony SCPS -Superintendent Bromwell.pdf**

Uploaded by: W.David Bromwell

Position: FAV

# Somerset County Public Schools

**W. David Bromwell**  
Interim Superintendent of Schools

**Tracie Bartemy**  
Chief Academic Officer



**Board Members**  
**Matthew Lankford**, Chairman  
**Andrew Gleason**, Vice Chairman  
**Mary Beth Bozman**  
**William McInturff**  
**John Robertson**

March 11, 2026

David Bromwell, Superintendent of Somerset County Public Schools  
Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee  
Position: Favorable

Good afternoon, Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and honorable members of the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee. My name is David Bromwell, and as Superintendent of Somerset County Public Schools and on behalf of the Somerset County Board of Education, I ask for a favorable report on Senate Bill 508 – Somerset County Board of Education – Alterations.

This legislation makes four changes to the Somerset County Board of Education to update the statute regarding Open Meetings Act Compliance; Student Board Members; Vacancies on the Somerset County Board of Education; and Compensation to correspond with other local boards of education in Maryland.

It became clear to me after having been involved with 64 Official monthly Board of Education meetings and countless work sessions at my previous district in Dorchester County and now in Somerset County that clarification in statute is needed to prevent confusion about which actions the Somerset County Board of Education can and cannot take in executive session and to be in compliance with the Open Meetings Act.

Senate Bill 508 also creates the statutory authority to add two student board members, one from each public school in Somerset County; allows the Somerset County Commissioners to appoint a qualified individual to fill any vacancy on the Somerset County Board of Education until a successor is elected consistent with 14 other Maryland counties; and adjusts the compensation of the Somerset County Board of Education to be on par with other local boards.

Thank you for your consideration of this important local bill, and I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 508.

# **Opposing SB508.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sharyn Yuloff

Position: UNF

**Sharyn Yuloff**

Former Special Education Teacher  
Certificated Parent Educator  
Somerset County Resident

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

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**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**.

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Sincerely,

Sharyn Yuloff

Princess Anne, MD

**SB508 Letter.pdf**

Uploaded by: Siana Brown

Position: UNF

03/09/2026

Dear Members of the Maryland Senate,

I am writing to urge you to reject Senate Bill 508, an emergency measure that would significantly alter the governance structure of the Somerset County Board of Education. Labeling this legislation an “emergency” is particularly concerning given the serious governance and financial issues currently surrounding Somerset County Public Schools.

Recent reporting has revealed a nearly \$20 million discrepancy between the school budget approved by the county commissioners and the “actual total budget” later cited by the Board of Education, prompting a costly forensic audit. At the same time, state officials have warned that millions in grant funding could be jeopardized due to governance and compliance concerns. These issues demand greater transparency and accountability—not less. Instead, SB508 would allow the Board of Education to take actions during executive session, reducing public visibility into decisions that directly affect students, educators, and taxpayers. The bill would also shift the authority to fill board vacancies from the Governor to the Somerset County Commissioners, concentrating political influence locally and removing an important layer of independent oversight.

Equally troubling is the provision increasing compensation for board members. The bill would nearly double the annual pay for members and the board chair. While fair compensation for public service can be appropriate, it is difficult to justify increasing compensation at the same time the district is facing serious budget discrepancies, financial oversight concerns, and unresolved questions about how education funds are being managed. Governance reforms should prioritize accountability and stability before increasing compensation for those responsible for oversight.

These structural changes are especially troubling given the recent turmoil surrounding the leadership of Somerset County Public Schools. In 2024, the Board of Education appointed Dr. Ava Tasker-Mitchell as Superintendent under a four-year contract. Within the first year of her tenure, the board abruptly voted to terminate her employment. The action immediately drew statewide attention because it occurred without clear public explanation and raised significant due-process concerns. The Maryland State Superintendent of Schools intervened and issued a stay of the termination in order to preserve the status quo while legal appeals proceeded. Ultimately, after months of conflict between the board and the superintendent, the parties announced that they had “mutually agreed” to part ways following a closed-session meeting.

This sequence of events—an abrupt termination attempt, state intervention over due-process concerns, and a final leadership departure following closed-door deliberations—has raised serious questions within the community about transparency and governance in Somerset County schools.

Somerset County has seen similar controversies before. In 1992, Dr. H. DeWayne Whittington, the county’s first African American superintendent, was removed from his position by the Board of Education despite decades of service. A jury later found the board liable for racial discrimination in that case and awarded damages. This history underscores why transparency and independent oversight in school governance matter.

Against this backdrop, SB508 moves in the wrong direction. Allowing boards to take actions in executive session while simultaneously concentrating appointment authority locally risks further eroding public trust at a time when the community is already seeking answers regarding financial management and leadership decisions.

Somerset County’s students deserve stable leadership, responsible stewardship of public funds, and governance that operates in the open. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to reject Senate Bill 508.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Siana Brown', with a long, sweeping horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Siana Brown

Princess Anne, Somerset County, Maryland