

# **SB0554\_Sen.Hayes**

Uploaded by: Antonio Hayes

Position: FAV

**ANTONIO HAYES**

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

*Legislative District 40*



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

**Bill:** Senate Bill 554

**Title:** *Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners – Appointment Process – Alterations*

**Committee:** Education, Energy, and the Environment

**Sponsor:** Senator Antonio Hayes

*Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,*

For the record, I am Senator Antonio Hayes, and I am here to present Senate Bill 554, which, with the adopted amendments, seeks to modernize the appointment process and provide fair compensation for the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners.

Under current law, the Mayor of Baltimore must select School Board appointees from a list provided by the "Baltimore City Public School Board Community Panel". SB 554 repeals the statutory provisions mandating the use of this specific Community Panel for the selection of nominees.

However, to ensure robust community engagement, amended provisions now require the Mayor to hold a public hearing to select qualified candidates for appointment to the board.

- The Mayor must provide at least 10 days' advance notice of this hearing, posted electronically on the school system's website.
- This hearing guarantees that dozens of specified community organizations, as well as the public at large, have the opportunity to present their views.
- Furthermore, these specified groups may submit their preferred ranking of board candidates to the Mayor prior to an appointment.

Following this public input process, the Mayor retains the power to appoint the voting members, but these appointments will now be subject to confirmation by the Senate of Maryland.

Crucially, this bill preserves the rigorous qualification standards. The Board must still include:

- At least four members with high-level knowledge and expertise concerning the successful administration of a large business, nonprofit, or governmental entity.
- At least three members possessing a high level of knowledge and expertise concerning education.
- A parent of a student enrolled in the Baltimore City Public School System.
- A member with knowledge or experience in the education of children with disabilities.

Additionally, recognizing the immense dedication required to serve, the amended bill introduces compensation for board members.

- Board members, excluding the student member, are entitled to receive \$10,000 annually as compensation.
- A student member who completes a full term will be granted a \$10,000 scholarship to be applied toward higher education or a registered apprenticeship program.
- This scholarship will be paid directly to the institution or program and is not considered taxable income.

By instituting public hearings, Senate confirmation, and fair compensation, we ensure a transparent, rigorous, and equitable governance structure for the Baltimore City Public School System.

I respectfully request a favorable report with amendments on Senate Bill 554.

**Position:** Favorable with Amendments

# **Senate Bill 554 Testimony-Antonio Hayes (1).pdf**

Uploaded by: Antonio Hayes

Position: FAV

**ANTONIO HAYES**

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

*Legislative District 40*



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

**Bill:** Senate Bill 554

**Title:** *Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners – Appointment Process – Alterations*

**Committee:** Education, Energy, and the Environment

**Sponsor:** Senator Antonio Hayes

*Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,*

For the record, I am Senator Antonio Hayes, and I am here to present **Senate Bill 554**, which seeks to modernize and streamline the appointment process for the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners.

The Current Process under current law, the Mayor of Baltimore must select School Board appointees from a list provided by the "Baltimore City Public School Board Community Panel". This panel is composed of representatives from various specific organizations, including the Teachers Union, the City Council, and others. Currently, if the Mayor does not wish to appoint someone from the provided list, they must reconvene the panel to submit additional names .

SB 554 proposes two primary changes to improve accountability and efficiency in the selection of school leadership:

This bill repeals the statutory provisions mandating the use of the Community Panel for the selection of nominees. By removing the panel, we allow the Mayor direct authority to select the best-qualified candidates for these critical roles.

Crucially, this bill establishes a new check and balance. While the Mayor retains the power to appoint the nine voting members, these appointments will now be subject to confirmation by the Senate of Maryland. This confirmation requirement also extends to appointments made to fill vacancies on the Board.

It is important to note that while the *selection process* is changing, the *qualification standards* are not. SB 554 preserves the requirements that:

- At least four members must possess high-level knowledge and expertise in business, non-profit, or government administration.
- At least three members must possess high-level expertise in education.
- The Board must include a parent of a student currently enrolled in the system.
- The Board must include a member with knowledge regarding the education of children with disabilities.

By instituting Senate confirmation, we ensure that nominees undergo a rigorous vetting process consistent with other high-level appointments in the State. This adds a necessary layer of state-level oversight to the governance of the Baltimore City Public School System.

The changes in this Act will take effect on July 1, 2026. The Senate confirmation requirement will apply to members appointed or filling vacancies after that effective date .

I believe this structure provides the right balance of executive authority and legislative oversight.

I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 554.

**Position: Favorable**

# **Fautleroy Testimony**

Uploaded by: Jessica Fautleroy

Position: FAV

# Public Statement on SB0554

Perspective from a Former Baltimore City School Board Community Panel Member

As a former member of the Baltimore City School Board Community Panel, appointed through the Parent and Community Advisory Board for Baltimore City Public Schools and representing families through Disability Rights Maryland, I share my firsthand perspective regarding the proposed elimination of the Community Panel through SB0554.

I served on the Parent and Community Advisory Board for Baltimore City Public Schools (PCAB) from 2018–2022, including serving as Vice Chair in 2019 and Interim Chair in 2020. My appointment to PCAB came through Disability Rights Maryland as the parent representative of a Baltimore City Schools student with a disability.

In 2019, I served on the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners Community Panel representing PCAB in reviewing and recommending candidates for the school board.

The panel intentionally brought together voices from across Baltimore’s education and civic landscape, including representatives from the Baltimore Teachers Union, Baltimore City Council, Baltimore Family Alliance, and Disability Rights Maryland.

Panel members reviewed applications, evaluated leadership experience, and discussed the needs of Baltimore City Public Schools to ensure community perspectives were part of school system governance.

SB0554 would eliminate the Community Panel and change how members of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners are selected.

School governance decisions affect students, families, educators, and neighborhoods across Baltimore. Community participation in selecting school leadership therefore has real value.

Serving on the panel demonstrated how deeply Baltimore residents care about the future of our schools. Regardless of where individuals stand on SB0554, understanding the role the Community Panel plays in bringing community voice into school governance is important.

## **Jessica T. Fautleroy, MSW, LCSW-C**

Former Member, Baltimore City School Board Community Panel (2019)

Member, Parent and Community Advisory Board for Baltimore City Public Schools (2018–2022)

Vice Chair (2019) | Interim Chair (2020)

Parent Representative appointed through Disability Rights Maryland

**SB 554 POSITION FWA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lou Fields

Position: FWA

Louis C. Fields  
Post Office Box 3014  
Baltimore, MD 21229

March 9, 2026

To: Chair Senator Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair Senator Cheryl G. Kagan, and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Re: SB 554 — Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners – Appointment Process Alterations

**Position:** Favorable with Amendments

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

As a resident of Baltimore City's 40th District, I write to express serious concerns regarding the longstanding governance, accountability, and performance challenges within Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS). For more than two decades, BCPS has experienced repeated scandals, fiscal mismanagement, and academic underperformance, despite steadily receiving increased funding.

Student outcomes remain troubling. Attendance and graduation rates have declined, standardized test scores remain among the lowest in the nation, and persistent issues—such as grade manipulation, social promotion, school violence, and deferred maintenance—continue to undermine public confidence. At the same time, administrative staffing and compensation have expanded significantly, with limited evidence of corresponding improvements in student achievement.

According to publicly available payroll data, more than 100 BCPS employees earned over \$150,000 in 2023, including a dozen non-teaching administrators earning over \$200,000 annually. These figures stand in stark contrast to declining academic outcomes and enrollment.

#### Governance and Accountability Concerns

Baltimore City voters and the Baltimore City Council currently have minimal influence over the appointment of the members of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners. Of the 12 board members, nine are appointed by the Mayor, two are elected citywide, and one is a student representative. In contrast, 19 of Maryland's 24 school boards are fully elected.

Given the scale of BCPS—serving more than 77,000 students, employing approximately 8,600 staff, and operating with a \$1.7 billion annual budget—greater public oversight and accountability are warranted. The Board's authority to hire and retain senior leadership, including the Superintendent, without meaningful City Council involvement has contributed to a lack of transparency and public trust.

#### Record of Persistent Underperformance

Over the past 20 years, BCPS has faced repeated academic failures, financial crises, and operational scandals, including budget deficits, corruption within facilities management, grade-changing scandals, inaccurate enrollment reporting, and chronic infrastructure neglect. Despite significant increases in funding, student achievement indicators—such as graduation rates, attendance, SAT scores, and NAEP performance—have consistently declined relative to state and national benchmarks.

BCPS students continue to rank near the bottom among large urban districts nationwide, while enrollment has fallen by thousands of students over the past decade. Meanwhile, administrative staffing has grown, and per-student spending has increased substantially.

#### School Safety and Climate

School safety remains a critical concern. Reports of violence, weapons, and assaults persist, while enforcement and disciplinary actions have declined sharply. Public reporting suggests that incidents are frequently underreported to avoid negative designations, further eroding trust and accountability. Tragically, students have continued to lose their lives to violence, underscoring the urgency of meaningful reform.

#### Conclusion

Baltimore City children deserve a school system that prioritizes student learning, safety, transparency, and fiscal responsibility. SB 554, with the proposed amendments, represents a necessary step toward restoring accountability, strengthening governance, and ensuring that public input plays a meaningful role in the leadership of Baltimore City Public Schools.

I support SB 554 and respectfully urge the Committee to consider the following amendments:

##### Amendment 1:

Require all newly appointed and future BCPS Board members to be vetted and approved by a majority vote of the Baltimore City Council. The Council should hold at least one public hearing to receive testimony from Baltimore City residents prior to confirmation.

##### Amendment 2:

Grant the Mayor of Baltimore City the authority to select, appoint, and remove the BCPS Superintendent, subject to approval by a majority vote of the Baltimore City Council.

These amendments would introduce essential checks and balances, increase transparency, and restore public confidence in the governance of Baltimore City Public Schools.

Thank you for your consideration and your continued service to the people of Maryland.

Respectfully submitted,

Lou Fields

# **HB 554 Testimony (Senate Education, Energy & Envir**

Uploaded by: Anikwenze Ogbue

Position: UNF

**Testimony from Anikwenze Ogbue, City Schools Parent, District 43 Resident  
SB 554 - Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners - Appointment Process -  
Alterations**

**Before the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

**3/9/26**

**Position: UNFAVORABLE**

Good morning members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

My name is Anikwenze Ogbue and I am a proud resident of District 43A in Baltimore City and a parent of two children who attend our neighborhood zoned school.

SB 554 proposes that Baltimore City become the only school district where appointed school board members are confirmed by the senate, whereas the other 23 counties face no such requirement. Counties receiving larger percentages of state funding (Caroline 82.4%, Somerset 82.3%, Wicomico 80.6%, Allegany 78%) have fully elected and majority elected school boards. Why should Baltimore City be treated differently?

If this bill aligned Baltimore City with fully-elected and majority-elected school boards in the other 23 counties of Maryland and other large majority African American counties in the United States, then I would support it. Unfortunately, SB 554 does not do that. Instead, SB 554 makes our current majority-appointed board an outlier in the state by reducing our autonomy.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to issue an unfavorable report on SB 554.

Sincerely,

Anikwenze Ogbue

Baltimore City Public Schools Parent

District 43A

[a.ogbue@gmail.com](mailto:a.ogbue@gmail.com)

410-622-5159

## Revenue Sources for Public Schools in Fiscal 2025

County	State	Local	<u>Ranking by Percent State</u>		<u>Ranking by Percent Local</u>			
Allegany	78.0%	22.0%	1.	Caroline	82.4%	1.	Worcester	72.9%
Anne Arundel	40.5%	59.5%	2.	Somerset	82.3%	2.	Talbot	67.1%
Baltimore City	76.3%	23.7%	3.	Wicomico	80.6%	3.	Montgomery	64.6%
<b>Baltimore</b>	<b>51.9%</b>	<b>48.1%</b>	4.	Allegany	78.0%	4.	Howard	63.7%
Calvert	38.9%	61.1%	5.	Baltimore City	76.3%	5.	Calvert	61.1%
Caroline	82.4%	17.6%	6.	Dorchester	73.6%	6.	Anne Arundel	59.5%
Carroll	46.9%	53.1%	7.	Washington	70.9%	7.	Queen Anne's	59.4%
Cecil	61.3%	38.7%	8.	Prince George's	65.6%	8.	Kent	59.4%
Charles	55.9%	44.1%	9.	Cecil	61.3%	9.	Carroll	53.1%
Dorchester	73.6%	26.4%	10.	Charles	55.9%	10.	Garrett	50.1%
Frederick	50.5%	49.5%	11.	St. Mary's	54.7%	11.	Frederick	49.5%
Garrett	49.9%	50.1%	12.	Harford	52.3%	12.	Baltimore	48.1%
Harford	52.3%	47.7%	13.	Baltimore	51.9%	13.	Harford	47.7%
Howard	36.3%	63.7%	14.	Frederick	50.5%	14.	St. Mary's	45.3%
Kent	40.6%	59.4%	15.	Garrett	49.9%	15.	Charles	44.1%
<b>Montgomery</b>	<b>35.4%</b>	<b>64.6%</b>	16.	Carroll	46.9%	16.	Cecil	38.7%
Prince George's	65.6%	34.4%	17.	Kent	40.6%	17.	Prince George's	34.4%
Queen Anne's	40.6%	59.4%	18.	Queen Anne's	40.6%	18.	Washington	29.1%
St. Mary's	54.7%	45.3%	19.	Anne Arundel	40.5%	19.	Dorchester	26.4%
Somerset	82.3%	17.7%	20.	Calvert	38.9%	20.	Baltimore City	23.7%
Talbot	32.9%	67.1%	21.	Howard	36.3%	21.	Allegany	22.0%
Washington	70.9%	29.1%	22.	Montgomery	35.4%	22.	Wicomico	19.4%
Wicomico	80.6%	19.4%	23.	Talbot	32.9%	23.	Somerset	17.7%
Worcester	27.1%	72.9%	24.	Worcester	27.1%	24.	Caroline	17.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>52.4%</b>	<b>47.6%</b>						

Source: Local School Budgets, Department of Legislative Services

School District	School Board Composition	Year Established	Years as an Elected/Appointed Board
Baltimore City	Majority Appointed*	1898	124
Montgomery	Fully Elected	1951	75
Charles	Fully Elected	1970	56
Allegany	Fully Elected	1974	52
Howard	Fully Elected	1974	52
Washington	Fully Elected	1974	52
Carroll	Fully Elected	1976	50
Prince George's	Fully Elected**	1973	36
Kent	Fully Elected	1978	48
Somerset	Fully Elected	1978	48
Garrett	Fully Elected	1982	44
Calvert	Fully Elected	1995	31
Saint Mary's	Fully Elected	1996	30
Frederick	Fully Elected	2002	24
Worcester	Fully Elected	2002	24
Dorchester	Fully Elected	2004	22
Cecil	Fully Elected	2006	20
Talbot	Fully Elected	2006	20
Queen Anne's	Fully Elected	2008	18
Harford	Hybrid/Majority Elected	2010	16
Caroline	Hybrid/Majority Elected	2012	14
Wicomico	Fully Elected	2016	10
Anne Arundel	Fully Elected	2018	8
Baltimore County	Hybrid/Majority Elected	2018	8

Source: Maryland Department of Legislative Services (2026)

\*Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners: 124 years Appointed (1898-2022); 4 years Majority Appointed (2022-present) after two Elected seats added.

\*\*Prince George's County Board of Education: 36 years Fully Elected (1973-2001, 2006-2012, 2024-present). Fully Appointed (2002-2006) Hybrid/Majority Elected (2013-2024).

**School Boards in the Largest Majority Black Counties (U.S.)**

County	School Board Composition	Total Population	% African American
1. Prince George's, MD	Fully Elected	967K	64%
2. Shelby, TN	Fully Elected	930K	54%
3. DeKalb, GA	Fully Elected	764K	55%
4. Baltimore City, MD	Majority Appointed	586K	62%
5. Orleans, LA	Fully Elected	384K	60%
6. Clayton, GA	Fully Elected	298K	73%
7. Montgomery, AL	Fully Elected	229K	59%
8. Hinds, MS	Fully Elected	228K	73%
9. Richmond, GA	Fully Elected	207K	58%
10. Bibb, GA	Fully Elected	157K	56%

**School Boards in the Largest Majority Black Counties (Maryland)**

County	School Board Composition	Total Population	% African American
1. Prince George's	Fully Elected	967K	64%
2. Baltimore City, MD	Majority Appointed	586K	62%
3. Charles County	Fully Elected	157K	50%

Source: US Census Bureau

# **Testimony from Commissioner Ashley Esposito.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ashley Esposito

Position: UNF

Testimony from Commissioner Ashley Esposito  
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners  
SB0554 Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners - Appointment Process – Alterations  
3/11/26 | Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Position: Unfavorable

To the members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

My name is Ashley Esposito. I am a resident of Maryland's 40th Legislative District, Baltimore City's first woman elected school board Commissioner, and a parent of a student enrolled in Baltimore City Public Schools. Thank you for allowing me to provide my perspective on Senate Bill 0554.

Before running for election to the Board of School Commissioners, I was an applicant in the appointed process. Through that experience and watching the Community Panel interview applicants over the years, I learned what it takes to serve on a school board and to govern a major urban school district. Watching those interviews and participating in the process also gave Baltimore City residents insight into how candidates are vetted and allowed candidates to speak directly to community members about their qualifications and desire to serve. It is also a strong tool for recruiting future Commissioners.

School board service is important work. In my first year on the board, I logged over 600 hours serving on behalf of Baltimore's students. Commissioners must oversee school policies, budgets, and student outcomes for a school system serving tens of thousands of children and their families. We need to ensure that the candidates who are vetted are vetted by people closest to the work and fully understand the responsibility.

Eliminating the Community Panel deprives the public of an important process for selecting new school board members. Visibility and inclusion of community members in the selection process have built trust between the community and the school district. At a recent school board meeting, community panel members from organizations that serve on the panel testified about the importance of maintaining the community process. They requested that Commissioners voice their personal concerns about this bill. As decisions are being made about changing governance structures, I urge you to hear from the stakeholders who work with, teach, and raise the children who attend Baltimore City Public Schools.

The Community Panel has been one vehicle for engaging Baltimoreans in conversations about school board governance. The Community Panel interview process has allowed educators, community stakeholders, parents, and students to hear from candidates about their qualifications. Those conversations have also given the broader community insight into the issues facing each group that serves on the community panel by listening to the questions they ask each candidate.

I would like to see other elected officials partner with community stakeholders to explore ways to continue to grow community engagement through the community panel process. I would also be remiss if I did not mention the important role Baltimore City students have had in this conversation. Students have been advocating for increased Student Government Association membership and building the capacity of their Student General Assembly.

Students have shown leadership by engaging with the Commissioner selection process, where decisions about their education are being made. Students have provided thoughtful questions and insight into the needs of Baltimore's school children at every cycle of Commissioner selection. As board members work to make decisions about governance and oversight, student voices should be a part of those discussions, especially regarding who serves on the board. They have a very robust election process for their own Student Commissioner, who serves on the board.

Ensuring there are avenues for community and student engagement will continue to build strong systems of governance and help us reach our shared goal of ensuring a bright future for Baltimore's children. I strongly urge the committee to oppose SB 0554 and encourage the sponsors to work with the community to better understand the current process and offer feedback on how our systems can be improved. Thank you for your time and for all you do for Maryland's students.

Commissioner Ashley Esposito  
Board of School Commissioners  
Baltimore City Public Schools

# **Benjamin H. Grimaldi - SB0554 Testimony - Google D**

Uploaded by: Benjamin Grimaldi

Position: UNF

**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 Benjamin H. Grimaldi, I am a 9th grader from Baltimore City, and the Legislative Affairs Director for the Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City. 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. Last year, I was able to help with the interviewing and resume reviewing portion for selecting a student commissioner to fill a vacant position. It was valuable for me and for students across Baltimore City because it helped ensure that the student voice had a say in who the next Student Commissioner should be. Without this process, stakeholder groups will 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.

Thank you for considering my testimony,

Benjamin H. Grimaldi

1515 William Street, District 46

[Benjamin.h.grimaldi@gmail.com](mailto:Benjamin.h.grimaldi@gmail.com)

# **Opposition to SB554.pdf**

Uploaded by: Charlene Faison

Position: UNF

Charlene Faison  
621 S. Wickham Road  
Baltimore, MD 21229  
Ccwise23@gmail.com

February 26, 2026

Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair  
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Opposition to SB 554 – Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners Appointment Process

Dear Senator Hayes:

I write in strong opposition to Senate Bill 554. Although I am employed by the State of Maryland, I submit this correspondence solely in my personal capacity—as a private citizen, a proud parent of two graduates of Baltimore City Public Schools, and as a current Executive Member (Treasurer) of the Parent and Community Advisory Board (PCAB) and Chair of its Policy Committee.

SB 554 proposes eliminating the Baltimore City Public School Board Community Panel and removing the role of PCAB, which was created by Maryland law in 1997 to ensure that parents have a say in the Baltimore City Schools. It will also eliminate the voices of other long-standing community stakeholders from the nomination process for the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners. In doing so, the bill would grant the mayor sole authority to appoint members to the Board, subject only to Senate confirmation.

The current structure was established by law to ensure transparency, shared governance, and meaningful community engagement in selecting individuals who shape the direction of our school system. The Community Panel was designed to provide balanced representation from educators, parents, students, labor, civil rights advocates, and community organizations, again, like PCAB. This inclusive framework reflects the understanding that public education is a public trust.

Eliminating the Panel—and specifically removing PCAB and other community voices—undermines the very purpose for which it was created. The legislation appears to shift the process from one grounded in collaborative input to one centered in a single appointing authority. While Senate confirmation provides oversight, it does not replace the deliberate, community-based vetting process that currently exists.

As a parent and long-time community advocate, I believe that maintaining structured, meaningful public participation strengthens public confidence in school governance. Concentrating appointment power risks diminishing transparency and weakening accountability to families and stakeholders who are directly impacted by Board decisions.

PCAB ensures that families have a direct voice to the CEO of City Schools, her team and in the choices Baltimore City Public Schools Commissioners makes for the students of this city. We provide resources and pertinent updates to families that may otherwise not have access to the information they need or want about the issues that affect their community schools.

The mayor's office and his team are already clouded with negativity. Removing the community panel and giving him more power will create even more distrust in his office.

I respectfully urge members of the to committee to reconsider the provisions of SB 554 as it removes equity, transparency, and public trust. I request the Committee to return an unfavorable report.

Thank you for your consideration of my views.

Respectfully submitted,



Charlene Faison  
Private Citizen  
Parent of Two Baltimore City Public Schools Graduates  
Executive Member (Treasurer), Parent and Community Advisory Board (PCAB)  
Chair and PCAB Policy Committee

# **3\_9\_2026 Written Testimony in Opposition of SB0554**

Uploaded by: Chartae' Anderson

Position: UNF

**TO:** Chair Brian J. Feldman , Vice Chair Cheryl C. Kagan , and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**FROM:** Chartae' Anderson

**DATE:** March 11, 2026

**BILL:** SB0554 - Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners - Appointment Process - Alterations

**POSITION:** OPPOSE / UNFAVORABLE

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

My name is Chartae' Anderson, and I am a resident of the Middle East/21205 neighborhood in Baltimore City and I proudly serve as the Vice Chair of the Parent and Community Advisory Board (PCAB) for Baltimore City Public Schools. I am submitting this written testimony to strongly urge an **UNFAVORABLE** report on Senate Bill 554.

As an advocate for parent voice in education, I believe that the future success of our students requires community effort. It takes a village. It requires strong efforts in upholding practices and systems that allow for parent and community voice in education. SB0554 directly **attacks** that principle by completely eliminating the Baltimore City Public School Board Community Panel.

PCAB, the PTA, ASCBC, BTU, DRM, and other groups serve on The Baltimore City Public School Board Community Panel which ensures that parents, students, teachers, and community members have a mandated role in vetting and recommending qualified school board candidates to the Mayor. Eliminating this panel entirely removes the voices of Baltimore City families from the selection process. It strips us of our right to evaluate the individuals who will make critical decisions about our children's futures. **This is not okay. Removing this panel could set a precedent that parent and community voice is not trusted in spaces where decision making happens in City Schools.**

Additionally, SB0554 alters the appointment process to require that the Mayor's chosen board members be confirmed by the Senate of Maryland. This creates an unprecedented and unfair double standard. No other school district in the State of Maryland is subjected to State Senate confirmation for its local school board appointments.

While some have argued that the state's financial contribution to city schools justifies this state-level oversight, this argument is fundamentally flawed. Under the Kirwan blueprint, school funding is tied to student needs, not the governance whims of adults. **State funding should never be used as a paternalistic excuse to strip a local community of its voice.** We find it deeply hypocritical that state legislators champion local control for the Baltimore Police Department while simultaneously attempting to seize state control of our local school board.

**Finally, I am deeply concerned that this bill initially advanced through the City Senate Delegation without any public notice to stakeholders.** More than 70,000 families and young people depend on city schools, and we deserve a transparent, democratic process.

True equity means trusting communities to vet their own leaders. We cannot allow our voices to be erased from the school board appointment process.

For these reasons, I respectfully request an **UNFAVORABLE** report on SB0554.

Sincerely,

Chartae' Anderson  
Vice Chair, Parent and Community Advisory Board  
District 13  
Contact: [andersonchartae@gmail.com](mailto:andersonchartae@gmail.com)

**Corey Gaber SB554 UNFAVORABLE Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Corey Gaber

Position: UNF

**Testimony from Corey Gaber, Baltimore Teachers Union Vice President, District  
40 Resident  
SB554 - Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners – Appointment Process -  
Alterations**

**Before the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee**

**3/11/26 Position: UNFAVORABLE**

Good afternoon members of the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

My name is Corey Gaber. I'm a District 40 resident and a Vice President on the Baltimore Teachers Union Executive Board.

I'm writing to urge this committee to hold no vote or issue an unfavorable report on SB554, which would alter the Baltimore City School Board appointment process by eliminating the community panel. This legislation would reverse one of the few opportunities Baltimore City has to exercise local democratic control over its school board members. Up until 2022 Baltimore City was the only jurisdiction in Maryland whose entire school board was unelected/appointed. Even though we've added two elected seats out of 11 total, 19 other Maryland jurisdictions have fully elected boards, and the other four hybrid boards all have a majority of their seats elected.

We at the Baltimore Teachers Union believe this glaring difference is a vestige of white supremacy that says self-governance and democratic structures that empower citizens to choose their own representatives is a right that Baltimore City can't be trusted with. SB554 is in line with this paternalistic tradition of the state saying local decision making is fine for everywhere in MD except Baltimore City.

The community panel leverages the expertise of the content area experts in education and the directly impacted staff, students, and families to ensure that candidates for the school board possess the necessary skills and qualifications to serve our students. Keep in mind a lack of special education law expertise from school board members appointed by the state before the community panel was added led to City Schools being rightfully sued.

The community panel screens applications for appointed board seats, conducts interviews that are subject to the Open Meetings Act and are accessible to the public, and recommends to the Mayor a shortlist of qualified candidates to choose from.

SB554 trades the expertise of

- The Baltimore Teachers Union;
- The Mayor's Office;
- The Baltimore City Council Education and Youth Committee;
- The Baltimore City Public School Administrators and Supervisors Association;
- The Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools;

- The Downtown Baltimore Family Alliance;
- The Fund for Educational Excellence;
- the PTA Council of Baltimore City;
- The American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME);
- The Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City;
- The American Civil Liberties Union;
- The Parent and Community Advisory Board; and
- Disability Rights Maryland

for State Senators across all of Maryland, the majority of whom are not Baltimore City residents and who lack content specific education knowledge and the skin in the game which the current panelists have. It is a step backwards, removing the small slice of local control Baltimore City has over its own school system, despite already having the least amount of local control in the entire state.

This legislation is an insult to the hardworking people of Baltimore City Public Schools. None of its representative organizations were consulted prior to the bill's crafting, nor were they even notified that it was being heard in the City's Senate delegation so that we could speak against it. The lack of transparency and democracy in the bill's process alone should be disqualifying, in addition to the paternalistic content that trades hard won expertise for a game of statewide political trading.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to hold no vote or issue an unfavorable report on SB554. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Corey Gaber

City Schools ELA Teacher  
Baltimore Teachers Union Field Organizer  
Baltimore Teachers Union Executive Board Vice President  
District 40  
[cbgaber@gmail.com](mailto:cbgaber@gmail.com)  
410-458-3820

**BTU Testimony SB554 2026.pdf**

Uploaded by: Cristina E Duncan Evans

Position: UNF



AFT 340 AFL-CIO  
Seton Business Park  
5800 Metro Drive, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Baltimore, MD 21215-3209

**Senate Bill 554 – Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners - Appointment Process -  
Alterations  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
March 11, 2026, 1:00pm**

**UNFAVORABLE**

On behalf of the Baltimore Teachers Union, I respectfully urge you to issue an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 554, which would eliminate the existing Community Panel responsible for recommending nominees for our local Board of School Commissioners and instead vest that responsibility in the State Senate.

For years, the Community Panel has reflected a deliberate and hard-won commitment to inclusive governance. It includes representatives of labor, students, parents, civil rights advocates, community organizations, charter school advocates, and disability rights leaders — including participation from the American Civil Liberties Union. That breadth of representation is intentional and it is foundational to ensuring that the Board of School Commissioners reflects the diversity, lived experience, and educational expertise of the communities it serves.

This bill replaces that broad-based, subject-matter-informed body with the State Senate — a legislative body whose members, while deeply experienced in public policy, are not selected for nor required to possess specialized expertise in public education governance, special education compliance, civil rights enforcement, or the operational realities of urban school systems. Selecting school board commissioners requires a nuanced understanding of federal special education law, Title IX compliance, collective bargaining, student discipline reform, charter oversight, and the day-to-day challenges facing classrooms. The existing Community Panel was structured specifically to ensure that these perspectives are present at the table.

It is particularly concerning that this legislation removes the formal involvement of civil rights and disability advocates at a time when their presence is not only appropriate, but essential. Our district has previously faced costly corrective action stemming from special education and civil rights litigation. The inclusion of disability advocates and the ACLU on the Community Panel was not symbolic, it reflected a recognition that oversight and accountability must include those who have historically had to litigate for students' rights. Removing those voices risks repeating past mistakes and undermines public confidence that the district will meet its legal and moral obligations to students with disabilities and students whose civil rights have too often been compromised.

The elimination of labor and parent representation similarly sends a troubling message. Educators and families are not special interests — they are primary stakeholders. They are the individuals most directly

affected by the decisions of the Board of School Commissioners. A governance structure that sidelines us diminishes democratic participation and weakens the legitimacy of board appointments.

We are also concerned about the process by which this legislation has advanced. Stakeholders who have participated in and relied upon the Community Panel process were not notified in advance that this bill would be introduced or voted upon. The absence of meaningful stakeholder engagement in crafting legislation that fundamentally alters governance undermines the very transparency and accountability principles that the Board of School Commissioners is meant to uphold. Good governance reform should model the openness it seeks to promote.

Additionally, this proposal shifts authority away from a balanced, community-centered process toward a purely political one. While the Senate plays an indispensable constitutional role in our state government, concentrating appointment recommendation authority in a single legislative chamber risks politicizing a process that has benefited from diverse, nonpartisan community input.

Finally, as a history teacher, I'd like to provide some historical context. When this language was added in 2017, with then Delegate, now Senator Hayes as the lead sponsor, it was introduced as a City Administration bill and enjoyed broad support from the delegation. At a time when the City is taking its assets back from state control, including the Baltimore Police Department, it's disappointing that the Senate wants to take us farther from local control.

For these reasons — the loss of subject matter expertise, the exclusion of civil rights and disability advocates, the devaluation of community voices, and the troubling procedural path this bill has taken — we respectfully ask this Committee to issue an unfavorable report on SB554.

Thank you for your time and your consideration.

**SB 554\_AFSCME3\_UNF.pdf**

Uploaded by: Denise Gilmore

Position: UNF



1410 Bush Street (Suite A)  
Baltimore, MD 21230  
Phone: 410-547-1515  
Email: [info@afscmemd.org](mailto:info@afscmemd.org)

Patrick Moran – President

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## **SB 554 – Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners – Appointment Process – Alterations**

### **Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

**March 11, 2026**

#### **Position: UNFAVORABLE**

AFSCME Council 3 represents 55,000 state, county, and municipal employees across Maryland, including educational support professionals who work in Baltimore City Public Schools. We oppose senate bill 554. SB 554 would remove the community panel, of which AFSCME is a part, that is responsible for interviewing board applicants and submitting a list of finalists to the Mayor. The legislation replaces this community panel, with a process where appointed commissioners would be selected by the Mayor and then subjected to State Senate confirmation.

School boards should be locally controlled. The community panel in place currently allows voices from those who work in our school system, students, families, and community groups like the ACLU, and MD Disability Rights Coalition to have a voice in the selection process. Speaking to our experience, we bring our contracts in front of this board. It is helpful to know whether Board members support health and safety standards, or professional development for staff prior to their selection onto the commission. Sometimes the candidate that we recommend to the Mayor is chosen, and sometimes they are not, but it is nice for our members to have an opportunity to provide input on potential candidates who set policy about their work. In its purest form, this is what local control means.

There is no justifiable reason for Baltimore City to become the first and only jurisdiction in the state to have School Board Commissioners who are subject to state senate confirmation. We urge the committee to provide an unfavorable report on SB 554.



# **SB 554 - Baltimore City Board of School Commission**

Uploaded by: Denise Riley

Position: UNF



*A Union of Professionals*  
**AFT-Maryland**

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410/764-3030 • fax: 410/764-3008  
md.aft.org

Kenya Campbell  
PRESIDENT

LaBrina Hopkins  
SECRETARY-TREASURER

**Written Testimony to the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
SB 554 - Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners –  
Appointment Process – Alterations  
March 11, 2026**

**UNFAVORABLE**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, AFT Maryland is a state federation of unions including the Baltimore Teachers Union (BTU). On behalf of BTU, we ask for an unfavorable report on SB 554, which seeks to alter the appointment process for the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners.

The proposed changes in this bill threaten to undermine the hard-won progress Baltimore City has made toward a more democratic and transparent school board. The primary concern is the potential erosion of accountability to the public. For years, the community has worked to transition away from a strictly appointed board toward a hybrid or fully elected model for accountability and to ensure the board remains responsive to the citizens. This bill represents a move in the opposite direction.

SB 554 fails to address the underlying need for greater transparency and community partnership in our school system's governance. It risks creating a closed-door selection process that lacks the necessary oversight from the taxpayers who fund our schools. For the sake of stability and democratic integrity in Baltimore City's education system, AFT Maryland asks for an unfavorable report. Thank you.



# **SB 554 - BCPSS Board Appointment Process - ACLU Te**

Uploaded by: Frank Patinella

Position: UNF



## Testimony for the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

### Senate Bill 554 – Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners - Appointment Process - Alterations

UNFAVORABLE

March 11, 2026

AMERICAN CIVIL  
LIBERTIES UNION  
OF MARYLAND

FRANK PATINELLA  
SENIOR POLICY  
STRATEGIST

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PRESIDENT

DANA VICKERS SHELLEY  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ANDREW FREEMAN  
GENERAL COUNSEL

The ACLU of Maryland urges an unfavorable report on SB 554, which seeks to alter the current process for vetting and appointing candidates for Baltimore City Public Schools' Board of Commissioners. Currently, the Baltimore City Public School Board Community Panel (Community Panel), comprised of 13 stakeholder organizations, interview applicants for open seats on the board and makes recommendations to the Mayor for appointment. SB 554 would remove the Community Panel from the process and instead require that candidates selected by the Mayor be subject to approval by the Maryland Senate.

**Community and stakeholder voices are indispensable to the process of appointing city school board members.** Due to our representation of the plaintiffs in *Bradford vs Maryland State Board of Education*, the ACLU of Maryland is statutorily designated as a member of the Community Panel.<sup>1</sup> The other 12 panel members include the Baltimore Teachers Union, Mayor's Office, Baltimore City Council Education and Youth Committee, Baltimore City Public School Administrators and Supervisors Association, Maryland Alliance of Maryland Public Charter Schools, Fund for Educational Excellence, PTA Council of Baltimore City, American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City, Parent Community Advisory Board of the city school system, and Disability Rights Maryland.

These organizations represent broad and diverse constituencies throughout Baltimore City, and most of them are focused on improving educational outcomes and experiences for the most underserved students populations in city schools. Replacing the Community Panel with the Maryland Senate in this process would remove the voices of community members and core

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<sup>1</sup> MD Code, Education, § 3-108.1

stakeholders in the city school system – along with their valuable expertise in areas such as diverse parent and student perspectives, disability rights, race and gender equity, and interest of teachers and other school employees.

The Maryland Senate currently includes only five members who live in Baltimore City, while the remaining 42 senators represent other jurisdictions across the state. While the current appointment process may not be perfect, SB 554 would eliminate the existing community-based mechanism entirely and allow the Mayor to effectively select candidates unilaterally. It is not sound policy to grant confirmation authority to a governmental body in which fewer than 13% of members represent Baltimore City.

Currently, only two members of the board are elected directly by the Baltimore City voters. Of the remaining ten seats, nine are appointed by the Mayor and the student member is elected by the Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City. Many stakeholders believe that the Mayor holds too much influence over the board's composition. SB 554 would further dilute the community input and concentrate even more power in the hands of the Mayor.

Proposals to change the composition of the city school board or policies governing appointments to it warrant a far more thorough public conversation and robust engagement with the communities most affected. Advancing SB 554 without such a process would be premature and irresponsible.

**For the foregoing reasons, the ACLU of Maryland respectfully urges the committee to give SB 554 an unfavorable report.**

**SB554%20-%20Isaiah%20Draft%20Testimony.pdf.pdf**

Uploaded by: Isaiah Gregory

Position: UNF

Good afternoon, Members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

My name is Isaiah Gregory. I serve as President of the Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City and as a constituent of the 40th District.

I recognize the responsibility this Committee carries in shaping education policy. The structure of governance decisions affects not only students, but also educators, staff, families, and the broader Baltimore community.

During the February 27th session, it was stated that SB 554 does not prohibit the Mayor from seeking guidance or input from community bodies.

Respectfully, the concern is not whether consultation is allowed. It is whether participation is guaranteed.

There is a meaningful distinction between voices that may be considered and voices that are structurally embedded into the process.

The current Community Panel ensures that educators, labor representatives, civil rights organizations, parents, and student leadership have a formal role in screening nominees before appointments are made. SB 554 removes that mechanism and shifts stakeholder engagement from institutional design to executive discretion.

In Baltimore City, there has been an ongoing dialogue among students, educators, and labor partners about the importance of moving from symbolic engagement to structural inclusion. Many stakeholders have expressed that being heard in conversation is not the same as being embedded in governance.

When structured mechanisms are removed, it can reinforce the perception that stakeholder voice is secondary rather than foundational.

Students, teachers, and staff are not peripheral actors in this system. We are directly impacted by board decisions in resource allocation, working conditions, discipline policy, and educational opportunity.

If governance reform is the objective, then it is worth asking whether removing a formalized community mechanism strengthens transparency, or risks weakening durable trust.

Stakeholders are not asking for a courtesy consultation. They are asking for structural inclusion.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge careful reconsideration of SB 554 as written or amendments that preserve guaranteed stakeholder participation.

**SB0554 Testimony\_ Izma Sheikh .pdf**

Uploaded by: Izma S

Position: UNF

**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: Favorable**

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

My name is Izma Sheikh, and I am an 8th-grade student at Henderson Hopkins School in Baltimore City. Students like me may not yet be able to vote, but the decisions made by the Baltimore City School Board shape our education every day.

That is why it is so important that the process for selecting school board members includes the voices of the communities most affected by those decisions.

Currently, the Mayor must consult with a community panel when appointing members of the Baltimore City School Board. This panel includes stakeholders such as teachers, parents, students, and other community members. These engagement sessions are an important opportunity for stakeholders to share their perspectives about who should help oversee our school system.

Senate Bill 554 would remove this requirement. Without these engagement sessions, stakeholder groups may lose an important opportunity to have their voices heard in the process.

The bill would also require the Maryland State Senate to confirm Baltimore City School Board members. However, this does not replace the value of local input. No other school district

is required to undergo this state-level confirmation process. There is a clear difference between consulting the communities directly affected by school board decisions and seeking approval from a body further removed from those communities.

Baltimore's schools should be shaped by the voices of Baltimore's students, families, and educators. Removing community engagement from the appointment process risks moving decisions further away from the people most impacted by them.

For these reasons, I respectfully request an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 554.

*Thank you for considering my testimony,*

*Izma Sheikh*

*izsheikh2019@gmail.com, 410-301-3902*

# **Written Testimony Opposing SB0554 Submitted 3.9.20**

Uploaded by: Jayson Green

Position: UNF



**TO:** Chair Brian J. Feldman , Vice Chair Cheryl C. Kagan , and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**FROM:** Jayson J. Green, Chair, Parent and Community Advisory Board (PCAB)

**DATE:** March 9, 2026

**BILL:** SB0554 - Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners - Appointment Process - Alterations

**POSITION:** OPPOSE / UNFAVORABLE

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

My name is Jayson J. Green, and I serve as the Chair of the Parent and Community Advisory Board (PCAB) for Baltimore City Public Schools. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of PCAB to strongly urge an **UNFAVORABLE** report on Senate Bill 554.

SB0554 proposes the complete elimination of the Baltimore City Public School Board Community Panel, stripping parents, educators, students, and community advocates of our statutorily mandated voice in the school board appointment process. We fiercely oppose this legislation for the following reasons:

### **1. A Direct Threat to Community Voice and Our Democratic Way of Life**

Currently, the Community Panel guarantees a seat at the table for a broad, expert cross-section of our city. This includes PCAB, the Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City (ASCBC), the Baltimore Teachers Union (BTU), the PTA, the Public School Administrators and Supervisors Association (PSASA), AFSCME, charter school representatives, the ACLU, Disability Rights Maryland, and the Fund for Educational Excellence.

Shielding these vital stakeholder groups from the appointment process is detrimental to the success of our schools and an affront to our democratic way of life. Denying community members a vote in vetting the individuals who govern their children's education is a profound problem that disenfranchises the very people this system is supposed to serve.

### **2. The False Narrative Surrounding the Community Panel's Process**

Proponents of this bill, including its sponsor, have publicly argued that the Community Panel overly restricts the Mayor's ability to choose school board members. This shows a fundamental misunderstanding of how our panel actually operates.

Every organization on the Community Panel has an equal vote. No single group possesses more voting power than another. Our sole goal is to thoroughly vet and vote for the best possible candidates based strictly on their qualifications and their proven dedication to supporting the students, families, and staff of Baltimore City Public Schools.

Furthermore, the argument that this process forces the Mayor's hand is factually incorrect. Over the last three appointment cycles, the Community Panel voted for and submitted our top-tier candidates. In all three instances, the Mayor did *not* select our top three choices; instead, the Mayor's office utilized its discretion to choose the



candidates they preferred from the broader qualified pool. The panel does not dictate the Mayor's choice; it simply acts as a necessary, democratic safeguard to ensure the community has vetted the pool of candidates.

### **3. The Hypocrisy of Reversing Local Control**

Just nine years ago, then-Delegate Antonio Hayes sponsored House Bill 562. That legislation was built on the premise that Baltimore City deserved local control. He successfully fought to remove the Governor from our school board appointments and proudly created this very Community Panel to ensure that parents and anchor institutions had a mandated voice.

It is deeply hypocritical that Senator Hayes is now dismantling his own legacy. By attempting to tear down the community panel he created, he is backtracking on his previous commitment to local empowerment and attempting to hand confirmation power over to the State Senate. Baltimore City families were the "points of strength" he championed in 2017—it is unacceptable to silence us in 2026.

### **4. An Unfair Double Standard and the "State Funding" Excuse**

If passed, SB0554 would make Baltimore City the *only* school district in the State of Maryland subjected to State Senate confirmation for its local school board appointments.

Some have argued that the state's financial contribution to city schools justifies this state-level overreach. This is fundamentally flawed. Under the Kirwan blueprint, school funding is tied to student needs, not the governance whims of adults. State funding should never be used as a paternalistic excuse to strip a local, predominantly Black and Brown community of its democratic voice. We find it highly contradictory that state legislators champion local control for the Baltimore Police Department while simultaneously attempting to seize state control of our local school board.

### **5. A Shielded and Opaque Process**

Finally, we must note on the record that this bill initially advanced through the City Senate Delegation without any public notice to stakeholders. More than 70,000 families and young people depend on city schools, yet this process was shielded from the public, depriving us of our right to provide opposition testimony when it mattered most.

True equity means trusting communities to vet their own leaders. We cannot allow our voices to be erased from the school board appointment process to satisfy political maneuvering.

For these reasons, I respectfully request an **UNFAVORABLE** report on SB0554.

Sincerely,

**Jayson J. Green**

Chair, Parent and Community Advisory Board (PCAB)  
Baltimore City Public Schools

# **SB554 Oppose (Written).pdf**

Uploaded by: Kenzie Funk

Position: UNF



## Testimony in OPPOSITION of

### Senate Bill 554: Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners - Appointment Process - Alterations

Senate Education Energy and the Environment Committee

Position: Oppose

March 11, 2026

Strong Schools Maryland is a network of education advocates dedicated to ensuring the full funding and faithful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The Blueprint prioritizes meaningful stakeholder engagement in decision making as a way to ensure accountability, transparency, and inclusivity in systems where voices have been historically excluded. **Although our organization focuses on state level public education policy and Blueprint implementation, we believe that this bill would set a dangerous precedent, removing the voices of labor, students, families, and community groups from local decision making process impacting our public schools.** As a result, Strong Schools Maryland urges an unfavorable vote on Senate Bill 554, which would eliminate the existing Community Panel responsible for recommending nominees for Baltimore City's Board of School Commissioners and instead vest that responsibility in the State Senate.

For years, the Community Panel in Baltimore City has reflected a deliberate and hard-won commitment to inclusive governance at the local level. Its membership brings together representatives of labor, students, parents, civil rights advocates, community organizations, and disability rights leaders. The breadth of representation is intentional and foundational to ensuring that the Board of School Commissioners reflects the diversity, lived experience, and educational expertise of the communities it serves.

This bill replaces that broad-based, subject-matter-informed body with the State Senate — a legislative body whose members, while deeply experienced in public policy, are not selected for nor required to possess specialized expertise in public education governance, special education compliance, civil rights enforcement, or the operational realities of urban school systems. Additionally, the absence of meaningful stakeholder engagement in crafting this legislation that fundamentally alters governance undermines the very transparency and accountability principles that both the Board of School Commissioners and the Blueprint is meant to uphold.

Fundamentally, this proposal shifts authority away from a balanced, community-centered process toward a purely political one. **No other school board in the state is required to obtain State Senate approval for appointed positions.** While the Senate plays an indispensable constitutional role in our state government, concentrating appointment recommendation authority in a single legislative chamber risks politicizing a process that has benefited from diverse, nonpartisan community input.

**For these reasons, we respectfully urge an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 554.**

For more information, contact Kenzie Funk: [Kenzie@strongschoolsmaryland.org](mailto:Kenzie@strongschoolsmaryland.org)

# **MAPCS - Senate Bill 554 – Baltimore City Board of**

Uploaded by: McKenzie Allen

Position: UNF

**Senate Bill 554 – Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners – Appointment Process – Alterations**  
**Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**  
**Position: Unfavorable as Written**

March 11, 2026

The Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools (MAPCS) respectfully submits this testimony regarding **Senate Bill 554**.

MAPCS is the statewide nonprofit organization that supports and advocates for Maryland's public charter schools. In Baltimore City, charter schools serve thousands of students and families and operate as public schools within the Baltimore City Public Schools system. As such, charter school communities have a strong interest in the governance and oversight of the district.

We appreciate the sponsor's focus on strengthening accountability and transparency in the appointment process for the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners. Ensuring strong leadership for Baltimore City Public Schools is critically important for students, families, and educators across the district.

MAPCS does, however, have concerns about the bill's elimination of the **Baltimore City Public School Board Community Panel**. The Community Panel plays an important role in ensuring that a broad coalition of stakeholders—including parents, educators, and community organizations—participates in identifying and recommending qualified candidates for service on the Board.

MAPCS currently serves on this panel and values the opportunity to contribute the perspective of Baltimore's public charter school community. Charter schools are an important part of the district's public education landscape, and their students and families benefit when a wide range of voices helps inform the board selection process.

Rather than eliminating the Community Panel, MAPCS encourages consideration of a structure that **preserves the Community Panel while incorporating the additional legislative oversight contemplated in SB 554**. For example, maintaining the panel's role in vetting and recommending candidates while adding Senate confirmation of appointments could strengthen accountability while preserving meaningful community engagement.

Additionally, the General Assembly may wish to consider whether **legislative representation on the Community Panel** could further strengthen the process while maintaining the valuable role of community stakeholders.

This type of approach would ensure that **both community voices and legislative oversight** remain part of the process for selecting members of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners.

For these reasons, MAPCS respectfully urges the committee to **consider amendments to SB 554 that preserve the Community Panel while enhancing legislative participation and oversight**, and absent such amendments, to give the bill an unfavorable report.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

**Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools**

**DRMtestimony2026.SB554.pdf**

Uploaded by: Megan Jones

Position: UNF



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

1500 Union Ave., Suite 2000, Baltimore, MD 21211  
Phone: 410-727-6352 | Fax: 410-727-6389  
DisabilityRightsMD.org

## **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.

Contact: Megan Jones [meganj@disabilityrightsmd.org](mailto:meganj@disabilityrightsmd.org) and 443-692-2508.

# **Letter of Opposition SB554 - Google Docs.pdf**

Uploaded by: Melissa Schober

Position: UNF

March 9, 2026

Senate Brian J. Feldman, Chair  
Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: Letter of Opposition, SB 554, Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners - Appointment Process - Alterations**

We are current and former Baltimore City Schools families, teachers, school leaders, and community advocates who believe that the success of young people and schools requires more involvement in the classroom and at the ballot box, not less. As such, we write to respectfully request an unfavorable report on SB 554, Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners - Appointment Process - Alterations by this Committee.

Baltimore City stands alone in Maryland. We are the *only* jurisdiction with a supermajority appointed school board and the only one where members are expected to serve in a volunteer capacity.<sup>1 2</sup>

We are deeply concerned that Senator Antonio Hayes and the Baltimore City Senate Delegation voted to advance SB554 – a bill that would eliminate parent, student, union, elected, and disabled voices from the appointments process – without any notice to constituents in Baltimore City and without formal notice to at least some of the groups named to the current Community Panel.. Indeed, the website and social media pages for the Senate Delegation have not been updated in over a year.

As Senator Hayes [noted](#), Baltimore City does rely on the state for the majority of its funding. But that is hardly unique. [Four jurisdictions receive more than Baltimore City and 13 others receive more than half their funding from the state.](#) Under Kirwan, school funding is tied to student needs, not the governance whims of adults. Senator Hayes should know - he voted for the bill to change the funding formula.

Despite Senator Hayes' apparent knowledge of the “points of strength” within our city and his pledge to “leverage our strengths to support the next generation,” [on his campaign website](#), Hayes’ bill cuts out the

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<sup>1</sup> As of January 2026, only four of Maryland’s 24 jurisdictions have any appointed school board members; the remaining 20 jurisdictions are entirely elected. Apart from Baltimore City, the three jurisdictions with a combination of elected and appointed members are: Baltimore County, in which four (4) of 12 members are appointed by the Governor from a list of names provided by the Baltimore County School Board Nominating Commission that serves a similar function as Baltimore City’s Community Panel; Caroline County, in which two (2) of the five (5) voting members are appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate; and Harford County, in which three (3) of the 11 members are appointed by the County Executive with the advice and consent of the County Council.

<sup>2</sup> All other school boards offer members a salary, reimbursement, or a salary and reimbursement. For example, Boards with a similar number of students include Montgomery County \$25,000 (member), \$29,000 (President); Prince George’s County, \$18,000 and up to \$7,000 in Board-approved expenses; Howard County, \$15,000; Anne Arundel County, \$8,000 (member); \$9,000 (Vice-chair), \$10,000 (Chair). Although there was a report as the result of Chapter 765, Maryland Laws of 2023, that [recommended compensation](#), none was forthcoming. As a result, all Baltimore City Board members remain unpaid.

anchor institutions and community organizations he previously lauded. Just nine years ago, then Delegate Hayes sponsored [HB562](#), which removed the Governor from the school board appointments process and created the Community Panel to review nominees and make recommendations to the Mayor.

Baltimore City families do not need the paternalism of Maryland Senate approval to govern our schools. Instead we deserve what every other community in the state already enjoys: direct democratic engagement. We regret that Senator Hayes and his colleagues do not agree.

Melissa Schober, MPM  
Baltimore City School Parent (Class of 2026)  
Former Disability Rights Maryland appointee to the Parent and Community Advisory Board (PCAB)  
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[An additional 53 signatories may be found here at Change.org](#)

# **Ferrell Testimony SB 556 2026 - Google Docs.pdf**

Uploaded by: Nathan Ferrell

Position: UNF

**Testimony from T. Nathan Ferrell, American Federation of Teachers Maryland -  
Vice President, District 40 Resident  
SB554 - Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners – Appointment Process -  
Alterations**

**Before the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee**

**3/11/26**

**Position: UNFAVORABLE**

Good afternoon members of the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

My name is Nathan Ferrell, I'm a District 40 resident and a Vice President of the Maryland State Federation of the American Federation of Teachers.

I am also a Baltimore City Public School Teacher and proud member of the Baltimore Teachers Union.

I'm writing to urge this committee to hold no vote or issue an unfavorable report on SB554, which would alter the Baltimore City School Board appointment process by eliminating the community panel.

This legislation is bad for Baltimore City Public School students, families, workers and the community at large. This legislation eliminates the one opportunity for stakeholder input and educational experts to exercise local democratic control over the appointment of school board members.

Baltimore City continues to be the least democratic jurisdiction in Maryland for school boards and we continue to have the vast majority of our commissioners as unelected/appointed. Despite adding two elected seats out of 11 total. The 19 other Maryland jurisdictions have fully elected boards, and the other four hybrid boards all have a majority of their seats elected.

The community panel that this bill seeks to eliminate allows content area experts in education and the impacted staff, students, and families to ensure that candidates for the school board possess the necessary skills and qualifications to serve our students.

The community panel also includes special education law expertise. This is to ensure that qualified school board members are appointed by the state to avoid lawsuits stemming from City Schools being rightfully sued.

The community panel convenings and interviews are subject to the Open Meetings Act and are accessible to the public. The result of these meetings is to recommend to the Mayor a shortlist of qualified candidates.

This legislation to remove the community panel is a step backwards and removes the final tiny bit of local control Baltimore City has over its own school system.

This legislation is an insult to the hardworking people of Baltimore City Public Schools. None of the representative organizations on this community panel were consulted prior to the bill's crafting. The Baltimore City Senate Delegation were not even notified that it was being heard in the City's Senate delegation to speak against it. The lack of transparency and democracy in the bill's process alone should be disqualifying.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to hold no vote or issue an unfavorable report on SB554. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Nathan Ferrell

BCPSS Teacher  
Baltimore Teachers Union Member Engagement  
AFT-MD - Vice President at Large  
[nathanferrell5@gmail.com](mailto:nathanferrell5@gmail.com)  
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**Oscar Diaz [ASCBC] - SB0554 Testimony-2.pdf**

Uploaded by: Oscar Diaz

Position: UNF

**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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# **SB 554 - Oppose - BCBSC Advice & Consent.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sam Mathias

Position: UNF

**BILL:** Senate Bill 554  
**TITLE:** Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners - Appointment Process - Alterations  
**HEARING DATE:** March 11, 2026  
**POSITION:** UNFAVORABLE  
**COMMITTEE:** Education, Energy, and the Environment  
**CONTACT:** Sam Mathias, Legal & Policy Director ([smathias@mabe.org](mailto:smathias@mabe.org))

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all the state's local boards of education, **opposes Senate Bill 554, Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners – Appointment Process – Alterations.**

Currently, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners (the “Board”) is comprised of 11 adult members; nine of whom are appointed by the Mayor of Baltimore from a list of nominees generated by a panel of statutorily identified stakeholders engaged and embedded within Baltimore City; and two of whom are elected at-large. The Board also has a single student member. Senate Bill 554 would remove the community panel from the Board’s governing statute and require the Mayor’s nine appointed members to be confirmed by the Senate of Maryland. MABE opposes this bill as a disruption of locally developed governance structures long established and respected by the General Assembly.

Maryland has long allowed for incremental, locally developed revisions to local board of education structure resulting in different election and appointment systems for local boards of education. Senate Bill 554 would inject statewide legislative confirmation into a fundamentally local governance decision. As this Committee knows, the Maryland Senate represents districts across the entire state, most of which have no direct electoral accountability to Baltimore City residents. Requiring Senate confirmation puts local governance decisions in the hands of officials who are not accountable to the community.

Lastly, the change could establish a precedent for increased state involvement in local board governance. Historically, the General Assembly has respected locally tailored board structures developed over time for individual jurisdictions. Introducing statewide confirmation authority for one board would depart from that longstanding practice and could open the door to similar interventions elsewhere. Maintaining decision-making structures close to the community has long been a defining feature of Maryland’s approach to local school system governance.

**For these reasons, MABE respectfully urges an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 554.**

**SECAC testimony (1).pdf**

Uploaded by: sheila Billups

Position: UNF

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Special Education Community Advisory Council (SECAC), I write to express our strong opposition to SB554, which would eliminate the community panel responsible for nominating school board commissioners.

The Community Advisory Panel is not symbolic. It is a vital accountability mechanism that ensures diverse community representation in the governance of our public schools — including representation from special education advocates, parents of students with disabilities, and individuals with lived experience navigating special education systems.

Eliminating this panel would remove one of the only structured avenues through which the voices of students with disabilities and their families are meaningfully included in the school board selection process.

Students receiving special education services are among the most legally protected — and historically underserved — populations in our education system. Their rights are safeguarded under federal and state law, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), precisely because of a long history of exclusion and harm. School board commissioners make decisions that directly affect special education funding and staffing levels, inclusion practices and least restrictive environment implementation, and disciplinary policies that disproportionately impact students with disabilities.

When the nominating process includes advocates who understand these issues, it increases the likelihood that commissioners will have the knowledge, commitment, and lived perspective necessary to protect vulnerable students.

Removing the community panel risks consolidating power in a process that may not prioritize disability rights, equity, or compliance with special education law. Without guaranteed representation from special education advocates, there is a real danger that decisions will be made without adequate understanding of how they affect students with disabilities. History shows us that when these voices are excluded, students are placed at risk of educational neglect, inappropriate discipline, segregation, and denial of services.

The Community Advisory Panel ensures transparency, accountability, and community trust. It strengthens, rather than weakens, governance. Eliminating it reduces public participation at a time when collaboration is most needed.

Students with disabilities cannot advocate for themselves in legislative chambers. Their families and community representatives must be at the table. This bill removes those seats.

We respectfully urge the Committee to reject SB554 and preserve the Community Advisory Panel to ensure that the governance of our schools reflects the needs of all students — including those who require special education services.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sheila Billups  
Chair, Special Education Community Advisory Council  
sbillups@bcps.k12.md.us

# **Testimony SB 554 - Baltimore City Board of School**

Uploaded by: Dawana Sterrette

Position: INFO

**Testimony of the  
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners  
Letter of Information  
Senate Bill 554 – Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners – Appointment Process –  
Alterations**

**March 11, 2026**

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners provides this letter of information to express concerns that it has about the current legislation before the committee. These same concerns were expressed before the Baltimore City Senate Delegation. As drafted, the legislation would remove the community panel from providing a list of recommended persons to the Mayor to serve on the school board and would require the Mayor’s appointments to be confirmed by the full Senate of Maryland. There is no school board in the State that requires Senate confirmation. Additionally, the only Baltimore City commissions that require Senate confirmation are appointed by the Governor.

Currently, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners consists of 11 adult members appointed by the Mayor from a list of candidates recommended by the Community Panel. The Community Panel is comprised of a variety of community and locally elected representatives:

The Baltimore Teachers Union

The Mayor’s Office

The Baltimore City Council of Education and Youth Committee

The Baltimore City Public School Administrators and Supervisors Association

The Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools

The Downtown Baltimore Family Alliance

The Fund for Educational Excellence

A parent member of the PTA Council of Baltimore City

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

The Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City

The American Civil Liberties Union

The Parent and Community Advisory Board

Disability Rights of Maryland

The Baltimore City school board is an uncompensated volunteer board made up of individuals with specific expertise:

4 members with business expertise

3 members with education expertise

One parent of a student attending Baltimore City Schools  
One member with an expertise in special education  
One student member elected by high school students  
2 members elected from a citywide vote

In 1997, Senate Bill 795 passed that made alterations to the Baltimore City School Board to allow it to operate as other school boards in the State. This legislation required that school board members be jointly appointed by the Mayor and the Governor, thus it was dubbed a “City-State Partnership” and no Senate confirmation was required. However, the role of the Governor was removed in 2017 with the passage of Senate Bill 1012. Without the role of any state official in the appointment process it seems as if Senate confirmation should not be required of a local school board, particularly since when there was a role for the Governor there was no Senate confirmation.

There has been some discussions that the Baltimore City School Board receives a large share of its school system budget from the state, and therefore should be subjected to Senate confirmation. There are other local school boards that receive large, if not larger percentages of their school budgets from the State and are not confirmed by the State Senate.

As you know, budgeting for state education funding is based on relative wealth and Baltimore City is one of the lowest wealth school districts in the State, therefore it makes sense that a larger share of its funding should come from the State.

There is already difficulty in finding members to serve the school board because of the specific expertise needed, coupled with a lack of compensation. Adding a senate confirmation process will ultimately make it even harder to find good candidates to serve.

Additionally, the Board is currently undergoing a search for a new CEO (superintendent). Making such a major change in the Board at this time can only make it more difficult to attract good candidates or scare others away from applying. Applicants need to know that there is stability in the Board and its members. If the senate does not confirm a member it only adds to instability on the school board.

The Baltimore City School Board should not be treated any differently than other school boards in the State. The Baltimore City Delegation has fought to have the school system operate like other school districts and this seems as if it’s a step backwards.

Dawana Merritt Sterrette, Esq.  
Executive Director, Legislative and Government Affairs  
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners  
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