

BILL: House Bill 565
TITLE: County Boards of Education – Elections – District Voting (Fair Representation Act)
HEARING DATE: February 11, 2026
POSITION: UNFAVORABLE
COMMITTEE: Government, Labor, and Elections
CONTACT: Sam Mathias, Legal & Policy Director (smathias@mabe.org)

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all the state’s local boards of education, **respectfully opposes House Bill 565, County Boards of Education – Elections – District Voting (Fair Representation Act).**

HB 565 would require that six local boards of education (Calvert, Cecil, Garrett, Montgomery, Queen Anne’s, and St. Mary’s) elect their regionally representative members solely by the voters residing within those regions. MABE respectfully suggests that this bill could be a local delegation bill, rather than as a statewide mandate prescribing a specific voting structure for selected jurisdictions.

Each of Maryland’s 24 local boards of education operates under a governance structure set forth in its own section of the Education Article. These structures were developed over time through local legislation and democratic processes and reflect different governmental arrangements of each county. As a result, board composition and election methods vary widely across the State. Some boards of education have a mix of at-large and regionally representative members. See, e.g., Charles County, Md. Code Ann., Ed. Art. § 3-501(a). Some boards have all at-large members. See., e.g., Frederick County, Md. Code. Ann., Ed. Art. § 3-5B-01(a). Others are structured such that each councilmanic district votes for its own representative on the school board. See., e.g., Dorchester County, Md. Code. Ann., Ed. Art. § 3-5A-02(b)(2). Still others operate under hybrid models that combine elected and appointed members. The six jurisdictions impacted by this bill have created a governance structure that enables all the county residents to vote for members of its board.

MABE supports preserving this overall governance flexibility and the long-standing legislative practice of allowing local governance structures to be shaped through local processes. While we understand the policy considerations reflected in House Bill 565, we are concerned that applying a uniform voting requirement to a limited number of counties could depart from that established approach.

For these reasons, MABE respectfully urges the Committee to consider whether this issue is better addressed at the local level and therefore opposes the bill. We respectfully request an unfavorable report.