



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 11, 2026

Madam Chair, Mister Vice Chair, and Members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee,

House Bill 0565, *County Boards of Education – Elections – District Voting (Fair Representation Act)*, ensures that members elected to represent specific school board districts are chosen by the voters who reside in those districts. This legislation promotes fair representation, strengthens local accountability, and aligns school board elections with core democratic principles already in practice across Maryland.

As the Committee considers this bill, it is important to recognize how at-large voting structures can dilute district voices and weaken accountability. When candidates designated to represent specific geographic districts are elected countywide, communities may find that their localized educational needs and priorities are overshadowed by broader countywide interests.

The Fair Representation Act addresses this concern by requiring that district-based board members be elected by a plurality of votes cast within their respective districts. This approach ensures voters directly select the individuals responsible for representing their schools and neighborhoods, while preserving existing at-large seats where applicable. The bill does not restructure school boards, alter term lengths, or impose new mandates on counties. It simply clarifies the electorate for district-specific seats.

Many Maryland jurisdictions already use district-based voting for boards of education. HB565 brings additional counties into alignment with these established practices, promoting consistency, fairness, and clarity across the State's education governance framework. Rather than creating a new model, the bill builds on proven approaches already functioning successfully in Maryland.

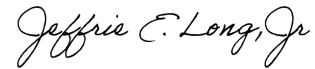
District-based voting enhances responsiveness and trust. Parents, educators, and community members benefit when their representative is directly accountable to the voters they serve. This structure encourages engagement, transparency, and confidence in school board decision-making.

Importantly, HB0565 does not disrupt the tenure of current board members. It applies prospectively and takes effect beginning with the 2028 election cycle, providing ample time for election administrators and local governments to prepare for implementation.

At its core, this legislation affirms a simple principle: representation should reflect the will of the voters most directly affected by local education decisions. By ensuring district representatives are elected by district voters, HB0565 advances fairness, accountability, and public trust in Maryland's education system.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 0565. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Very Truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeffrie E. Long, Jr." The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Delegate Jeffrie E. Long, Jr.