

## **HB0565 County Boards of Education – Elections – District Voting (Fair Representation Act)**

To the attention of the Honorable Government, Labor, and Election Committee.

Today I speak in FAVOR of HB 565. As a parent, grandparent, and 41 year county resident, I have become alarmed by the recent extreme politicization of our school board.

For example, in early 2024 the two Republican members of the BOE joined with 4 Republican County Commissioners to force an external audit of school finances, casting a cloud of suspicion over the then-Democratic majority. When the audit was released—after the election—CCPS was in full compliance with recommendations of the 3 prior state audits. But the damage was done. The \$53,000 audit—in my view a partisan campaign expenditure—was paid for by the taxpayers.

Non-partisan elections are intended to reduce political bias in our schools. However, the Southern Maryland News on November 6, 2024, reported, “In the end, it was all about the team. On Tuesday . . . voters went big for the triumverate of Melissa Goshorn, Joseph Marchio, and Paul Harrison . . .” This slate had the financial backing of a wealthy delegate, along with 4 of the 5 commissioners.

Our Democracy is under attack, even at the very foundational level of our communities—our local schools. HB 565 can help level the playing field by requiring candidates to campaign, and be accountable, to the families of the district they represent, and reduce the ability of one political party to control the outcome of the entire election. HB 565 supports democracy and accountability. Please support it.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Catherine Cretu  
Owings, MD