

**BILL:** House Bill 1288  
**TITLE:** County Boards of Education - Appointed Members in Leadership Positions - Prohibition  
**HEARING DATE:** March 11, 2026  
**POSITION:** UNFAVORABLE  
**COMMITTEE:** Ways and Means  
**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 House Bill 1288, County Boards of Education – Appointed Members in Leadership Positions – Prohibition.**

MABE firmly believes that the roles and responsibilities of board members, whether elected or appointed, should remain within the purview of each local board. Practically speaking, House Bill 1288 would interrupt certain boards' abilities to function by arbitrarily restricting who may serve in leadership roles. Some local boards rely on appointed members to provide experienced leadership and ensure diversity in representation, and this prohibition would cease their ability to continue to do so.

More fundamentally, House Bill 1288 strips local jurisdictions of their ability to make democratic decisions about their governance structures. Each county (and Baltimore City) has a unique board structure, developed over time through local legislative action, and this bill would override those locally determined decisions.

**Appointed Board Members are Part of the Democratic Process.**

Maryland has long allowed for incremental, locally developed revisions to local board of education structure that have resulted in different election and appointment structures for local boards of education. All are democratic, including those who are appointed. Appointed members are selected through a process established by elected officials and subject to public accountability. Appointed board members are still selected by democratically elected officials, are accountable to the public through those who appoint them, and are subject to removal on the same grounds as elected members of county boards. See Md. Code Ann., Educ. Art. § 3-108.

### **Appointed Board Members Can Bring Diversity and Representation in Leadership.**

Appointed members often bring essential expertise and diverse representation to school boards. Many appointment processes explicitly set requirements to ensure certain characteristics in favor of diversity and expertise. For example:

- Baltimore City requires that appointed board members have expertise in education, business, nonprofit, and government leadership, and designates seats for parents and those with experience in special education. Md. Code Ann., Educ. Art. § 3-108.1(h). **Nine members of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners are appointed by Baltimore's Mayor, and only two members are elected at large. Both the current Chair and Vice Chair of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners were appointed.**
- Baltimore County has four members who are appointed by the Governor from a heavily vetted and published list of nominees created by a 19-member nominating commission that is intended to reflect geographic, ethnic, and racial diversity of Baltimore County, and representation across key organizational stakeholders. Md. Code Ann., Educ. Art. § 3-2B-03.
- Caroline County also ensures that appointed members are selected to enhance board diversity. Md. Code Ann., Educ. Art. § 3-3A-02(a)(3)(ii). **Both the current Chair and Vice Chair of the Caroline County Board of Education were appointed.**
- Harford County requires that appointed members reflect the gender, ethnic, and racial diversity of the county. Md. Code Ann., Educ. Art. § 3-6A-01(d)(3)(ii). **Last month, the Harford County Board of Education duly selected its President, an appointed member, and its Vice President, an elected member, from among its membership.**

By prohibiting appointed members from leadership, House Bill 1288 disproportionately silences voices that were deliberately included to bring diverse perspectives to board decision-making. As such, House Bill 1288 would undermine board stability, reduce diversity in leadership, and disregard the democratic legitimacy of appointment processes.

**For these reasons, MABE respectfully urges an unfavorable report on House Bill 1288.**