

Members of the Ways & Means Committee,

My name is Liliana Norkaitis, and I am an appointed member of the Harford County Board of Education. I request your unfavorable report of HB 1288.

To be appointed to the Board, I was nominated by the County Executive, who was elected by a majority of Harford County voters, and my nomination was confirmed unanimously by the Harford County Council, representing voters from each of the County's six councilmanic districts. In Harford, our Board of Education is composed of six elected members and three appointed members.

I, and my fellow appointed members, hold the same voting power as my colleagues elected to the Board. We must meet the same residency requirements and cannot serve more than two consecutive terms.

Electing Board leadership is a responsibility of the Board alone. As the law directs, Board members, elected or appointed, hold the same rights and responsibilities. When we voted on leadership last month, our Board President, an appointed member, was elected unanimously. The way in which we arrived at the Board does not measure our commitment to serving our community.

In Caroline County, the Board of Education is composed of two members appointed by the Governor and three members elected by the voters. If this legislation were enacted, two of the three elected members would be required to lead the Board, whether they want to or not. Currently, both appointed members serve as Board leadership. In every county with appointed members, they must win the support of elected members in order to become leadership.

Barring appointed members of the school board from serving in Board leadership limits the potential for the best possible leadership. We must allow Boards of Education to decide upon their leaders. It would make no more sense for the General Assembly to restrict its leadership to members who were originally elected rather than appointed to their seats. This would create a two-tier membership that degrades the input of dually seated members and undermines the spirit of the laws which created those positions.

It is an honor to serve on the Harford County Board of Education, and I ask that you allow local Boards to retain this critical control over its own direction.

Thank you,

Liliana Norkaitis
Member-at-Large
Harford County Board of Education