

TESTIMONY FOR HB1288 County Boards of Education- Appointed Members in Leadership Positions- Prohibition

Position: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT

HB 1288 *County Boards of Education- Appointed Members in Leadership Positions- Prohibition* is an important step to promote transparency and public trust. It can prevent potential conflicts of interest that arise when appointed members control board leadership. School boards should reflect the direct will of the electorate. Restricting leadership positions to elected members will reduce the likelihood that political appointments (who may feel loyalty to the officials who appointed them) unduly influence board actions.

In Harford County, where I live, we have seen a number of appointed individuals vote according to their own personal views (that conveniently align with the expressed views of our county executive who appointed them), but in direct opposition with the majority of public sentiment. For example, in June 2024, the Harford school board voted 5-4 against making the optional AP African American Studies course a permanent offering. Conservative board members cited personal concerns about the curriculum being "divisive" and "highly political." After a significant outcry from the public, the decision was ultimately reversed.

in July 2025, the same board decided to remove the book "Flamer" by Mike Curato from our school libraries despite strong public opposition. At the first board meeting after the decision was announced, 52 of 55 speakers during public comment opposed the ban, with many asking the board to reverse the decision. These are just two examples that highlight the disconnect between our appointed board members and the will of the constituents.

I suggest a minor amendment to HB1288. For any school board that has three or fewer elected members, an appointed individual could be permitted to temporarily occupy a leadership position without penalty in the event an elected position is unexpectedly vacated. Once the elected seat is filled, the leadership role would revert to an elected member. This would prevent unnecessary delays in board business while maintaining the intent of HB 1288.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB1288.

Sincerely,

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