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Environment and Transportation
Committee

Subcommittees

Housing and Real Property
Land Use and Ethics



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Dear Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and Distinguished Members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

For the record, I am Delegate Ryan Nawrocki, requesting a favorable report on HB 89 – Baltimore County – Inspector General – Authority Over Baltimore County Public Schools.

Last year, the Baltimore County Council approved Resolution 40-25 with overwhelming bipartisan support to request state authorization to expand the Baltimore County Office of the Inspector General’s jurisdiction to include oversight of Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS). This bill would simply enable the Baltimore County Council to expand the office of the Inspector General as they requested.

At its core, this legislation is about giving tools, not mandates. It does not dictate how the County must act; rather, it enables local leaders to decide how to structure the Inspector General’s office best to serve the community. This bill does not automatically expand the Inspector General’s oversight. The Council will have the final say on broadening the jurisdiction as requested. As Baltimore County Council Chair Mike Ertel stated in his testimony in support of the legislation, “The passage of this legislation is important to enable the Baltimore County Inspector General to provide more direct accountability and oversight of the Public School System in the same manner as other County agencies and departments.”

This proposal also reflects feedback from Baltimore County residents who are seeking reassurance that public institutions are operating transparently and responsibly. As the League of Women Voters has said, this change, “will help strengthen operations, protect resources, and rebuild public trust at a time when concerns have been raised about how education dollars are managed.”

While BCPS has internal auditors, they are not investigators. One of the primary differences between auditors and investigators is the subpoena power granted to investigators. This tool allows investigations to be more thorough and comprehensive, since the Inspector General can access documents and testimony outside BCPS.

An Inspector General operating independently from BCPS can help reinforce trust in county government, school leadership, teachers, and staff by ensuring that concerns are examined fairly and comprehensively. Transparency protects not only taxpayers but also the many dedicated professionals who work every day on behalf of Baltimore County’s students. This is why this bill has the support of the Teacher’s Association of Baltimore County (TABCO). They have said, and I agree, that every dollar that does not properly advance student learning goals and student needs is wasted.

Another key distinction between the Inspector General’s role and auditors' lies in public disclosure. Unlike internal audits, the Office of the Inspector General is required to make its findings available to the public. This openness allows residents to understand better how decisions are made and how resources are used, fostering informed civic engagement and reinforcing public confidence.

Some have argued that expanding the authority to the Baltimore County Inspector General is redundant and unnecessary, as the Maryland Office of the Inspector General has an Inspector General for Education. The Inspector General for Education, Rick Henry, disagrees with that assertion, as he stated in his testimony regarding the bill. The Montgomery County Inspector General's office has jurisdiction over Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), as this legislation would authorize. Mr. Henry has stated that, "the dual roles of the IGs have never hampered an investigation but have enhanced outcomes by holding accountable those who commit fraud, waste, and abuse." Local and state oversight can, and should, work together to provide effective governance.

A concern raised regarding the legislation is the cost of implementation. The County has said it could cost an additional \$800,000 per year to accommodate additional staff and office expenses. There is no question that additional staff costs money; however, this does not account for potential savings from the office. In the Montgomery County Inspector General's 2025 Annual Report, she highlighted that \$18.1 million in questioned costs were found in just one year in MCPS. These are real dollars, and the possibility for similar enhanced accountability in Baltimore County may also exist.

With the proposed FY27 BCPS budget of \$2.49 billion, significant oversight is required to ensure tax dollars are spent efficiently and effectively, and this legislation supports that mission. Accountability and transparency are nonpartisan issues, and this legislation is an essential, actionable step in support of transparent, effective governance in Baltimore County.

Therefore, I respectfully ask the committee for a **favorable report for HB 0089**.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ryan Nawrocki".

Delegate Ryan Nawrocki