

BILL: Senate Bill 554
TITLE: Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners - Appointment Process - Alterations
HEARING DATE: April 1, 2026
POSITION: UNFAVORABLE
COMMITTEE: House Ways and Means Committee
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all the state's local boards of education, **opposes Senate Bill 554, Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners – Appointment Process – Alterations.**

Currently, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners (the “Board”) is comprised of 11 adult members; nine of whom are appointed by the Mayor of Baltimore from a list of nominees generated by a panel of statutorily identified stakeholders engaged and embedded within Baltimore City; and two of whom are elected at-large. The Board also has a single student member. Senate Bill 554 would remove the community panel from the Board's governing statute, and as amended, adds a list requiring the Mayor to provide advance notice to 34 distinct organizations in Baltimore City and the public at large of a hearing and for input. The bill also requires the Mayor's nine appointed members to be confirmed by the Senate of Maryland. MABE opposes this bill as a disruption of locally developed governance structures long established and respected by the General Assembly.

Maryland has long allowed for incremental, locally developed revisions to local board of education structure resulting in different election and appointment systems for local boards of education. Senate Bill 554 would inject statewide legislative confirmation into a fundamentally local governance decision, and would make Baltimore City's the only locally appointed school board in the state to require Senate confirmation. As this Committee knows, the Maryland Senate represents districts across the entire state, most of which have no direct electoral accountability to Baltimore City residents. Requiring Senate confirmation puts local governance decisions in the hands of officials who are not accountable to the community.

The General Assembly has historically respected locally tailored board structures developed over time for individual jurisdictions. Introducing statewide confirmation authority for one board would depart from that longstanding practice and could open the door to similar interventions elsewhere. Maintaining decision-making structures close to the community has long been a defining feature of Maryland's approach to local school system governance.

For these reasons, MABE respectfully urges an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 554.