

County Boards of Education - Appointed Members in Leadership Positions Prohibition

Dear Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

I am writing in support of HB1288, which will prohibit politically-appointed school board members from holding leadership positions, from which they could wield undue influence. As a parent of students in and employee of Harford County Public Schools, this bill is near and dear to my heart. As someone who was less-than informed during the last school board election, I was at first shocked to discover that school board members could even be politically appointed, then felt like the rug had been pulled out from under me when those appointed members ousted publicly-elected members from leadership positions. It really felt to me that our school board was no longer representative of what we had supposedly democratically elected in Harford County.

Maryland House Bill 1288 makes a simple but important argument: the leaders of our county school boards should be people chosen by voters, not appointed by government officials. Right now, nothing stops an appointed board member – someone who never faced an election – from serving as board president or chair. That means the most powerful seat at the table may belong to someone accountable only to whoever appointed them, not to parents, teachers, or the broader community. This feels like a slap in the face to the stakeholders in our public schools and community.

HB 1288 fixes this by prohibiting appointed members from holding leadership positions on county boards of education. It doesn't remove them from boards or strip their voting rights – it simply requires that leadership come from those who earned it through a public mandate. The bill is fair, providing a reasonable transition window for anyone currently in a leadership role, and its enforcement mechanisms are measured and proportionate.

Our public schools deserve public leadership. HB 1288 is a commonsense step toward ensuring that. It is in that spirit that I ask the Committee to issue a **favorable report** on HB 1288.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tracie Ulmes

Joppa, MD