

TO: House Ways and Means Committee

BILL: House Bill (HB) 828 – State Board of Education – Membership – Educational Support Member

DATE: February 25, 2026

POSITION: Letter of Information

Chair Wilkins and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) would like to share the following information regarding **HB 828**, which would alter the appointment mechanism to the State Board for one current member and require the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to adopt regulations and conduct an election for an educational support member of the State Board.

The State Board appreciates the intent of this bill to ensure that the voice and perspective of education support professionals (ESPs) are represented on the State Board. This perspective is certainly valuable to the State Board as it carries out its mission. We are fortunate to have current members of the State Board who have served in various capacities in school buildings.

We have concerns with the bill as currently drafted. Foremost is the requirement that MSDE conduct additional elections for members of the State Board of Education. MSDE currently manages one electoral process for the teacher member of the State Board. While MSDE has absorbed this administrative and financial requirement, this bill would increase the number of elections MSDE manages. The agency does not have the resources or expertise to manage multiple elections, and we are concerned about a trend towards charging MSDE with this responsibility. MSDE currently relies on outside vendors to host secure and equitable elections, which requires funding and staff to manage the project.

Additionally, conducting an election for ESPs would require MSDE to create new systems to track eligible voters and securely manage sensitive employee data. For the teacher member of the State Board, MSDE is able to identify eligible voters through the state licensure system. No such system exists for ESPs, and any new system created would need to be secure enough to store Personally Identifiable Information (PII) of ESPs. An election for ESPs would require local education agencies to provide PII for all ESPs to ensure that eligible voters are able to participate. To contact eligible voters, MSDE must provide a vendor with the list of email addresses or telephone numbers and enough PII for the voter to verify that they are eligible during the election process.

While we appreciate the thoughtfulness of the bill to ensure a robust and representative process, we are also concerned with increasing the number of State Board members who would not be able to participate in all matters coming to the State Board as appeals.

Lastly, we have concerns with outlining specific qualifications and appointment processes for members of the State Board to ensure that the Governor retains the flexibility to appoint members who have a wide array of experiences and skill sets. As drafted, this bill would result in four of the 14 State Board members selected through different processes than each other and the rest of the State Board.

The State Board requests that the committee consider this information as it deliberates **HB 828**. Please contact Zach Hands, Executive Director of the State Board, at Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov or at 443-915-6094, if you would like any additional information.