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Ways and Means Committee

Chair: Delegate Jheanalle Wilkins

Vice Chair: Delegate Jessica Feldmark

Kelly Olds, TABCO President, Educator

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Tuesday March 10, 2026

Testimony in favor of HB 11040

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony in favor of HB 1140.

The TABCO Representative Assembly, our legislative body of school-based leaders, voted for our union to support a 9-member all elected school board. As the president, I recognize and appreciate the compromise this bill proposes.

Democracy can be hard and complicated enough for constituents to navigate, without adding an entire electoral layer. People must know who their school board members are, how to reach them, and how to work with them. For this to be most effective, they should also know their counterpart on the County Council. This is more streamlined, more rational, and more effective. Splitting the council districts from the school board districts is confusing, without any added benefit.

Speaking of democracy, down-ballot races already see lower voter participation. That is bad for our judges and courts- it is also dangerous for the school system. Our school system, our county, does better with an engaged electorate. Active, passionate, parents and community members protect and advance our schools, which is critical for our students. Creating school board districts untethered to the council threatens to reduce public engagement which puts student outcomes at risk.

The partnership between council members and school board members can also be incredibly effective. There is a natural team between an elected school board member and their council counterpart. Splitting the districts up imperils this partnership and what it is capable of doing for the people of Baltimore County and more critically the students of our county.

Finally, we appreciate the role the school board nominating commission can play in ensuring that all the voices of our county are heard and seen on the school board.

For all these reasons I am in support HB 1140, we hope to see its passage, and I thank Delegate Forbes for bringing this forward.