

JEFFERSON L. GHRIST
Legislative District 36
Caroline, Cecil, Kent,
and Queen Anne's Counties

Appropriations Committee

Subcommittees

Capital Budget

Oversight Committee on Personnel

Education and Economic Development



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 9, 2026

The Honorable Jheanelle K. Wilkins
Chair, Ways & Means Committee
131 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Madam Chair and Members of the Ways & Means Committee,

We respectfully request your consideration and favorable report on HB 459, specifying guidelines for the State Board of Education's appeal authority over local boards.

We fully recognize the importance of the State Board of Education having an appeals process to ensure that local boards are in compliance with state law and regulations. However, the State Board's standard of review in this process is considered by the Department of Legislative Services to be an "arbitrary and capricious test", which we believe is poorly defined and gives the Board overly broad authority beyond questions of compliance with state law.

HB 459 would instead alter the standard of review to be an abuse of discretion or illegality. Under this standard, decisions of law and fact would be afforded the greatest deference and could only be overturned in circumstances when a local board's decision is illegal or completely outside the bounds of reason given the applicable law and facts.

HB 459 is an important step toward ensuring local Boards of Education maintain a reasonable degree of control over local decisions, while maintaining the State Board's authority for legal review, and creating a better-defined process for appeals. We respectfully request a favorable report and are available to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jefferson L. Ghrist".

Delegate Jefferson L. Ghrist
District 36