

SB 218/HB 288: State Superintendent of Schools - Prolonged State of Emergency - Authority to Declare: Please vote to **OPPOSE** this bill.

Dear Senators of the Education, Energy & the Environment Committee:

I am writing to express my strong **opposition** to **SB 218/HB 288**.

This bill represents a *serious overreach* of authority by granting an unelected State Superintendent the power to declare and maintain a prolonged state of emergency with sweeping consequences for Maryland's students, families, and local school systems. This bill goes too far by concentrating broad and ongoing authority in a single, **unelected** official without sufficient legislative oversight, clear limits, or meaningful accountability. It undermines parental rights, erodes local control of education, and weakens the constitutional separation of powers.

SB 218/HB 288 would allow critical decisions affecting daily schooling, access to classrooms, instructional methods, and student services to be made without meaningful parental input or consent. That is unacceptable. **Parents—not distant state officials—are best positioned to advocate for their children's educational, social, and emotional well-being.**

Education in Maryland has long been governed locally for good reason. Local school boards understand their communities and are accountable to the families they serve. **This bill shifts decision-making power away from locally elected bodies and concentrates it in a single, unelected government official, sidelining local voices and community oversight.**

Equally concerning is the precedent this bill sets for emergency governance. **Prolonged emergency powers bypass the General Assembly's role as the people's representatives and weaken essential checks and balances.** Emergency authority must be narrowly defined, time-limited, and subject to legislative approval—not left open-ended **at the discretion of one unelected official.**

Maryland's recent experience with extended emergency declarations in education exposed the real harms of centralized, unchecked authority: learning loss, mental health struggles, and unequal impacts on vulnerable students that underscore the need for transparency, checks and balances, and local input. SB 218/HB 288 risks repeating those mistakes rather than learning from them.

Good public policy requires balancing responsiveness with democratic accountability. This bill does not strike that balance.

For the sake of parental rights, local governance, and the constitutional balance of power, I urge you to oppose **SB 218/HB 288** and protect appropriate limits on executive authority in Maryland's education system.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,

Trudy Tibbals