

April 1, 2026

The Honorable Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Chair  
House Ways and Means  
130 & 131 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: Letter of Opposition, SB 554, Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners - Appointment Process - Alterations**

Chair Wilkins and Committee Members,

I am Melissa Schober, a former Disability Rights Maryland appointee to the Parent and Community Advisory Board (PCAB) for Baltimore City Schools, former board member of Creative City Public School, former PTO member of Medfield Elementary School, former mayoral appointee to the Community Schools Steering Committee. I am also the parent of a current senior student and spouse of a city schools teacher. **I am writing to ask you to oppose SB 554 and issue an unfavorable report.**

SB 554 would repeal the current process by which Baltimore City School Board members are appointed. The appointments process is of critical importance as we are the only jurisdiction with a supermajority appointed school board.

At present, the Baltimore City School Board appointments process is as follows: The Mayor's Office for Child and Family Success (MOCFS) posts announcing a vacancy or vacancies and welcoming applicants. MOCFS reviews applicants and advances qualifying individuals to the Community Panel. The Panel is composed of groups close to the daily work of the school system, including the Baltimore Teachers Union, Public School Administrators and Supervisors, PCAB, Parent Teacher Association, Disability Rights Maryland, etc. The Panel interviews the candidates it deems most qualified and those responsive to the statutory requirements (e.g., at least four (4) members of the Board must have significant business, governmental, or nonprofit management expertise) in a series of open meetings with public agendas, minutes, or videos. Candidates are rank-listed and submitted to the Mayor for interviews. The Mayor interviews one or more candidates and then selects one or more to fill the vacancy or vacancies.

During earlier hearings before the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee and before the Baltimore City House Delegation, the bill's sponsor argued the bill is necessary based on several false statements that demonstrate his unfamiliarity with the appointments process. To show why this bill is unnecessary and harmful, please note:

1. **That appointments to the Baltimore City School Board are or have ever been subject to Senate approval.** Baltimore City schools were under mayoral control from 1898 until the post-*Bradford* bargain that created the city-state partnership. Under that arrangement, made in 1997, appointments were joint mayoral-gubernatorial. In 2016, Del Glenn's bill (HB558) passed to add two elected seats beginning in 2022. In 2023, HB153, Del Wells' bill expanded voting rights for student members of the Board and created a task force to study compensation with a report published in 2024. At no time have any members ever been subject to Senate approval.
2. **That the Community Panel isn't transparent.** When control over appointments returned to the Mayor in 2017, the Community Panel was briefly closed. As the body is constructed in statute, I filed a complaint with the Open Meetings Act Compliance Board and ultimately prevailed (see 12

OMCB 98, 2018).

3. **That the Community Panel is composed of and only represents "special interests."** The Community Panel draws its membership from the plaintiffs and plaintiff representatives in *Bradford* and *Vaughn G* as well as teachers, supervisors, young people, charter schools, etc. Any construal of these groups as "special interests" demonstrates a complete failure to properly appreciate the history during which these groups and their minor children were deprived of an efficient and equitable education for decades. To label parents who fought for constitutional funding and/or the right of our children—like my own, who is a pediatric stroke survivor—to receive consummate and accessible educational services is wildly offensive. Such a statement shows zero understanding of or appreciation for the collective labor of many who knew their efforts would yield benefits too late for their own children but persisted for unknown future generations. While the sponsor may label that "special interest," I would instead call it solidarity, fellowship, and collaboration in service of our young people.
4. **That the Community Panel overly constrains Mayoral choice in appointments.** In meeting minutes from 2019, 2021, 2022, and 2023, one can readily read that the Mayor did not appoint some or any of the candidates -- even higher scoring candidates -- advanced by the Community Panel. The Panel recommends but does not require the Mayor to appoint; he is free to refuse and re-open the search as many times as he desires. If we wish to change the composition of the Board, then there is a statute available to do so without disturbing the advisory role for the Panel.
5. **That the Board lacks operational or business expertise and the Community Panel is part of the problem.** The current statute at Education 3-108.1 reserves four seats -- the most -- for members with direct expertise administering a large business, nonprofit, or governmental entity in a high-level position. Only three spots are reserved for those with educational expertise, one for a parent, and one for an individual with expertise or experience in educating children with disabilities. The Community Panel must operate within this framework and may only advance candidates who meet the statutory requirements.
6. **Because Baltimore receives a significant amount of state funding, the General Assembly should have more oversight.** Baltimore City does rely on the state for much of its funding. But that is hardly unique: [Four jurisdictions receive more than Baltimore City and 13 others receive more than half their funding from the state](#). Under Kirwan, school funding is tied to student need, not the governance whims of adults. Senator Hayes should know - he voted for the bill to change the funding formula.
7. **That the Board controls class sizes.** This is entirely false. Maryland is one of less than a dozen states where class sizes are not specified or outlined in statutory or regulations. Class size is also not a negotiable item in teacher contracts. Although some jurisdictions have class size guidelines, the Baltimore City School Board absolutely may not and does not have the power to cap class sizes.

Melissa Schober, MPM

Baltimore City School Parent (Class of 2026)

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