

## FAVORABLE

### HB1140 - Baltimore County Board of Education - Membership - Alterations

March 11, 2026

Chair Wilkins, Vice-Chair Feldmark, and Members of the Committee.

I am writing to urge passage of HB1140, which will change Baltimore County's hybrid school board from 7 elected positions plus 4 appointed, to a 9/2 mix. There are a variety of good reasons to do this, and I can't think of any reasons not to:

1) Baltimore County has historically had 7 Council districts and the school board mirrored this. However, over time it became clear that the districts were such that minority representation on the council was inadequate, and that was unlikely to change. There was a proposal to add 4 more districts, but in the end, it was decided to expand the Council to 9 districts. There have been no elections under the new regime, but it appears very likely that minority representation on the council will increase by 2 members as a result -- the leading candidates in districts 2, 3, and 4 are all black or Hispanic.

There is every reason to believe that changing the school districts to align with the council districts will also increase minority participation on the board, and will require less reliance on appointed members to improve minority representation, but... with 2 appointed members, there is still the opportunity to improve minority representation if needed. We changed to 9 council districts for a reason, it wasn't done without thought, and every reason that justified it for the council districts is equally valid for the school districts.

2) From an administrative/logistic point of view, switching to 9 districts (mirroring the council districts) is substantially easier. As it currently stands, each person now has a congressional district, legislative district, council district, and school district. This actually forced us to add 15 voting precincts which cost money to operate. During the next decennial census, we will need to separately redistrict the schools from the council districts which costs money and time. Now, one could argue, it's not a lot of money, but it's still an expense, and if we aren't getting anything out of it, what's the point?

3) It's a well known fact that voter participation is linked to ease of voting. I'm sure many voters couldn't say off the top of their head how many congressional, legislative, council, and school districts are in the state (or county), or which districts they are in. By keeping it at 7 districts and not tying the districts to the council districts, is guaranteed to sow more confusion among voters and suppress the vote -- especially after the next census when both the school and council districts will change independently.

4) History has shown that appointed school board members are less accountable to the public, and possibly less independent since they are appointed by the governor rather than elected by the people. There may be an argument that appointed members are needed to improve minority representation, but switching to 9 districts is more likely to guarantee minority representation, as minority representation may not be a priority for a future governor.

Fundamentally, I can think of no downsides to switching, but a lot of upside -- in terms of cost, accountability, and support for democracy.

Sincerely,



Daniel Meyer, District 10