



Maryland State Board of Education

200 WEST BALTIMORE ST. / BALTIMORE, MD 21201-2595 / (410) 767-0467

March 11, 2020

Delegate Anne R. Kaiser, Chair
House Committee on Ways and Means
House Office Building, Room 131
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: **House Bill 1634** - State Superintendent of Schools - Qualifications and Senate Confirmation

Dear Chair Kaiser:

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) submits this letter in opposition to House Bill (HB) 1634 - State Superintendent of Schools - Qualifications and Senate Confirmation, which would, among other things, require the State Superintendent of Schools to be appointed with the advice and consent of the Senate.

The State Board opposes HB 1634 on the grounds that it: (1) impedes the Board's ability to make effective and timely leadership decisions on behalf of Maryland's public school students and other stakeholders; and (2) is unnecessary and redundant in its attempt to provide a new system of checks and balances and ensure the selection of a high quality State Superintendent. Each of these reasons are discussed in further detail below:

Impedes the Board's ability to make effective and timely leadership decisions on behalf of Maryland's public school students and other stakeholders

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is at a critical junction with the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Given this immediate priority as well as the many ongoing responsibilities of the MSDE, it is imperative that the State have the ability to attract highly qualified candidates who possess extraordinary expertise and skills to address the changing education landscape, build on Maryland's successes, and advance the State's position as a national leader in preparing students for global competitiveness in the 21st century.

While the State Board believes that the Senate of Maryland shares the goal of attracting highly qualified candidates, requiring Senate confirmation for this position will unintentionally inhibit the State's ability to attract and recruit outstanding and well-qualified individuals to the State Superintendent position, due to the inherent risks of the confirmation process. Many candidates may not apply, knowing they would be announced as the *acting* State Superintendent only to have to go through an uncertain advice and consent process. Additionally, this requirement will unnecessarily delay the permanent appointment of an individual to the position, and if not confirmed, would impede departmental operations until a successor is identified.

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Is unnecessary and redundant in its attempt to provide a new system of checks and balances and ensure the selection of a high quality State Superintendent

Every member appointed to the State Board must be confirmed by the Senate of Maryland. This requirement already puts legislative oversight into the process of Superintendent selection. State Board members are carefully vetted, with consideration of each individual's character, personal and professional accomplishments, community involvement and ability to make a positive impact on the State's public education system. The additional level of confirmation required by HB 1634 is redundant and will impede the State Board's ability to make timely decisions on behalf of Maryland and its public school students.

The General Assembly has rightfully entrusted the State Board as the oversight arm of MSDE and invested the State Board "with the last word on any matter concerning educational policy or the administration of the system." This includes the appointment of the State Superintendent. It is worth noting that, for nearly 100 years, the State Board has successfully recruited and engaged exceptional individuals to provide leadership for the State and MSDE without the advice and consent of the Senate. The quality and caliber of the State Superintendents selected by the State Board has resulted in Maryland's long standing reputation as a national leader in public education.

For the reasons stated above, the State Board respectfully urges your committee to give HB 1634 an unfavorable report.

For additional information or questions, please contact Tiffany Clark at 410-767-0090 or tiffany.clark1@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,



Brigadier General Warner I. Sumpter (Ret.)
President
Maryland State Board of Education

c: State Board of Education Members
Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D., State Superintendent of Schools