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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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Testimony in Support of HB465 - State Superintendent of Schools - Qualifications and Senate Confirmation

HB465 is a straightforward bill that changes the way the State Superintendent of Schools is appointed, and adds additional qualifications to the position. This is a reintroduction of a bill from last session which was passed by the House of Delegates, but did not receive a Senate hearing.

HB465 has two major components. First, it requires that the Superintendent be confirmed by the Senate, furthering the system of checks and balances that is crucial to democracy. Nearly one quarter of Maryland's budget is allocated for education, which is the largest portion of our state budget, so it's crucial that we have checks and balances to make sure that no one branch of government has too much say in how that money is spent. HB465 ensures that the Superintendent nominee will be held accountable to the Senate.

Second, this bill imposes a "cooldown period" of one year on members of the Board of Education before they can become the Superintendent. It's critically important that the Superintendent is the most qualified candidate for the position, but right now, current members of the Board of Education can influence other members to select them as Superintendent when the position opens up.

Members of the State Board of Education are appointed, not elected, so Marylanders have very little representation in how the members of the Board and the Superintendent are selected. The individual who leads our public school system should bring transparency and expertise to the position, not someone with connections to those who select the Superintendent. The measures included in this bill ensure that the Board will pick the strongest candidate to oversee our schools and our children.

This bill comes at a crucial period in the future of our state's educational infrastructure. With the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the next Superintendent will play a major role in the transformation of Maryland's public education system over the next decade.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on HB465.