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Maryland Senate

For the record, testimony for the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
Senate Bill 382, Harford County - Board of Education - Terms of Appointed Members
March 3, 2020

OPPOSE

As a resident of Harford County, I was surprised to learn of Senate Bill 382 Harford County - Board of Education - Terms of Appointed Members that would do three core things:

1. Alter the requirement to appoint members to the Harford County Board of Education (BOE) from the Governor to the County Executive,
2. Require advice and consent of the Harford County Council for the appointments, and
3. Authorize the County Executive to fill a vacancy on the BOE.

On the face of it, this bill may appear simple but what you do not know is that it has not been vetted by the constituents of these senators back at home in Harford County. In fact, amendments to this bill were considered only once a significant backlash to the proposed amended cross-filed HB 283 was made aware to voters. Residents objected so much that the Harford County Delegation could not pass the bill and thus, vote it out as a delegation bill. As it was pre-filed, the cross-filed bill only remains that of Chair and Delegate Reilly. The SB 382 amendments have been put forth suddenly as a ploy to return the board of education to local control amid 6 elected members but there are alternatives.

Furthermore, this is a bad bill because of the conflict of interest that arises when the County Executive who develops the budget for the BOE also appoints its members; in addition to filling the vacancies without the advice and consent of the Harford County Council. The Board of Education is an independent body and with the County Executive having potential appointment authority of all 9 (6 elected who can vacate their positions) members of the Board of Education, it makes BOE members beholden to the County Executive and not to the best interest of students, parents, and community members.

Moreover, this bill alters the term of the appointed members who will be appointed within 90 days of the 2022 General Election to two years with no rationale. Consistent with this fact, is the inherent confusion of this exception when the bill itself says on line 29 that appointed members serve for a period of 4 years beginning on July 1.

This bill lacks accountability to the public and we deserve better. If local control is the issue, then the senators should convene with the voters and rethink how we can convene a group of education stakeholders over the summer who can develop a process and recommend to the Governor who to appoint to our Harford County Board of Education. This is a better approach rather than forcing this bill down our throat in a clandestine manner and politicizing education. **I ask that you cast an unfavorable vote for Senate Bill 382.**

Sincerely,
Marla Posey-Moss