



# Maryland State Board of Education

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February 3, 2021

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 465** - 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) 465 - 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 465 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**

COVID-19 has severely disrupted the education of over 900,000 Maryland PreK-12 children. We cannot overstate the potential harm that the once-in-a-century pandemic is having on the learning of our children, as well as its grave impact on their social-emotional wellbeing. The pandemic has also impacted our teachers, support personnel, administrators and parents.

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is at a critical junction in working with our local school systems, educational stakeholders, parents, and elected officials to overcome the long-term impacts of the pandemic, and reposition Maryland for continued educational reform. 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 overcome the learning disruption of COVID-19, 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. The State Board's executive search firm has warned us to expect a very competitive superintendent search process. They anticipate a larger than usual number of concurrent superintendent vacancies across the nation due in part to the COVID-19 burnout factor. As a result, top superintendent candidates will likely have two or more employment opportunities, in effect, making this a job market where demand significantly outpaces supply.

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. At this point in the process, the current search cannot, nor should it be, accelerated with the intention that it come before the Maryland General Assembly prior to the conclusion of the legislative session. Many top 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. Again, many of these candidates may have two or more firm, immediate job offers in-hand. 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.

**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 465 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 465 an unfavorable report.

For additional information or questions, please contact Zachary Hands at [Zachary.Hands1@maryland.gov](mailto:Zachary.Hands1@maryland.gov) or 410-767-0504.

Sincerely,



Clarence C. Crawford  
President, Maryland State Board of Education

cc: Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D., State Superintendent of Schools  
Zachary Hands