



**Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland House of Delegates,
Ways and Means Committee
March 3, 2021**

**Board of Education
of Howard County**

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**HB1190: FAVORABLE W/AMENDMENT
Howard County – Board of Education – Redetermination of Geographic
Attendance Area Ho. Co. 05-21**

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **HB1190 Howard County – Board of Education – Redetermination of Geographic Attendance Area Ho. Co. 05-21** with an amendment to clarify the intended action by the Board does not require school redistricting.

On January 24, 2019, the Board voted unanimously to initiate a comprehensive boundary review process seeking to balance capacity utilization through student assignment adjustments at all school levels. The process ended in November 2019, with more than 5,000 students attending a new school during the 2020-2021 school year. In addition to overcrowding, the process aimed to advance equity by addressing the distribution of students affected by poverty across schools, and plan ahead for the impact of a new high school, scheduled to open in fall 2023.

Through the ten-month-long process, parents, students, community members and elected officials in Howard County expressed their supports and concerns alike. The Board appreciates the sponsor's express intent to utilize reporting under the bill to determine how the Howard County Delegation can support the Board's future needs in balancing limited school capacity.

The Board, however, has a concern with the undefined duty within the bill to submit a "plan to adjust student enrollment to meet target utilization," in instances where schools remain outside target utilization, which seems to go beyond an informational report. While we understand that is not the sponsor's intent, plans to adjust student enrollment are typically redistricting plans. To put the stated intent into law, and avoid the cost of potential litigation, we are proposing the following amendment: On page 3, after line 7, insert:

(E) THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SECTION MAY NOT BE CONSTRUED TO REQUIRE THE BOARD TO REDISTRICIT OR ADOPT A REDISTRICITING PLAN.

Redistricting can be a difficult process where no one solution will satisfy everyone. From this most recent experience, it is also evident that costly, contentious litigation will result from those who do not agree with the decisions of the Board. Our amendment aims to ensure this bill cannot be used to argue that redistricting is required. For these reasons, we urge a FAVORABLE report of HB1190 from this Committee with the inclusion of the suggested amendment.