

**Testimony in Opposition of Senate Bill 908**  
**Harford County Board of Education - Appointment of Members –**  
**Alterations**  
**Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs**  
**March 15, 2022**

**Cynthia Poper**

I find the fury of activity to change the make-up and way the Harford County Board of Education is determined, an enigma.

There is nothing about the Board's make-up or the way the members are determined, or appointed, that is broken or needs fixing.

Allowing the appointed members to be chosen by the County Executive is leading us down the garden path to completely politicizing the Board of Education. It will allow the County Executive to reward and cherry pick political cronies to stack the Board of Education. Requiring five affirmative votes for these appointments from the County Council is further entrenching this same behavior.

Board of Education races and appointees need to be as far from traditional partisan politics as possible. There should be no political back scratching, no political pay back, and no political party loyalty called upon in the management of our schools. Allowing the County Executive to present potential appointments to the Governor, takes another step away from the local political fray. Decisions by the Board of Education need to be made not with political overtones, but in the best interests of our students and staff. Local political favors and political pressures have no part in the Board of Education.

I recognize that the senators feel that more local control over the membership of the Board of Education is needed. Mostly this comes from a knee-jerk reaction to the various policies and operations of Harford County Public Schools during the pandemic. The policies incited a very small, loud group of citizens that did not agree with the various health and safety requirements placed on schools to protect our students and staff. Changing the way the members are selected will not correct this problem.

Having the three appointed members selected by the Governor allows for the evening out of biases and allows for more diversity among the board members. It also allows for the opportunity to provide more experience from various business and industry backgrounds. Basically, removing local politics from the selection of the three appointed members means that we have the greatest opportunity to ensure that the Board of Education represents as much diversity, across as many areas and criteria as possible, not just party, or political loyalty.

A change of this magnitude requires input from the citizens of the county. The senators have not solicited opinions from all stakeholders, have not reached out to the current Board for their opinion, nor have they allowed for public debate or alternatives to their position to be presented. This bill was drafted without taking into consideration the varying or alternate positions on this issue throughout the county.

**For these reasons I am respectfully requesting that the committee return an unfavorable vote on Senate Bill 908.**