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BILL: Senate Bill 908
TITLE: Harford County Board of Education - Appointment of Members - Alterations
DATE: March 31, 2022
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes Senate Bill 908.

MABE has a longstanding adopted legislation position in opposition to local bills expanding initial board appointment authority to local governments. Local boards of education are entities of the State, not the county government. Because local boards are fiscally dependent on local governments, it is appropriate that local boards remain an independent voice for the school system and that a “check-and-balance” relationship continues between local boards and their respective local governments.

Senate Bill 908, if enacted, would make the appoint process in Harford County completely inconsistent with the authority of other local governments to appoint members of local boards of education in any other jurisdiction than in Prince George’s County and Baltimore City. Of the 14 members of the Prince George’s Board of Education, only 3 members are appointed by the local government. In addition, local governments sometimes have a role in appointing members to temporarily fill a vacancy on the board of education. MABE does not believe that these “exceptions to the rule” warrant the expansion of local government appointing authority proposed for Harford County under Senate Bill 908.

MABE appreciates that there is a diverse array of approaches taken in Maryland to electing appointing members of local boards of education. However, no similar board to the Harford County Board of Education currently has any comparable role for the local government in appointing members. Of Maryland’s 24 local boards of education, eighteen are comprised entirely of locally elected members; Anne Arundel County is transitioning from an all-appointed to all-elected board; the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners is appointed by the Mayor; and four hybrid boards are comprised of both appointed and elected members. Attached is MABE’s legislative position statement on appointed, elected, and hybrid boards including the status of the composition of each board.

To be clear, MABE rarely takes positions on local bills. However, this legislation is opposed by the affected local board and clearly violates the principle of local board independence articulated in MABE’s adopted legislative positions.

For these reasons, MABE urges an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 908.

ELECTED, APPOINTED & HYBRID BOARDS OF EDUCATION

MABE POSITIONS

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education, representing all local boards of education in Maryland:

- **Takes no position** on whether boards of education should be elected or appointed. There is no research-based evidence that either elected boards or appointed boards are more effective or accountable.
- ✗ **Opposes** bills expanding initial board appointment authority to local governments. Local boards of education are entities of the State, not the county government. Because local boards are fiscally dependent on local governments, it is appropriate that local boards remain an independent voice for the school system and that a “check-and-balance” relationship continues between local boards and their respective local governments.

BACKGROUND

Of Maryland’s 24 local boards of education, eighteen are comprised entirely of locally elected members; Anne Arundel County is transitioning from an all-appointed to all-elected board; the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners is appointed by the Mayor; and four are hybrid boards comprised of both appointed and elected members.

The following nineteen boards are elected:

Allegany County	Kent County
Anne Arundel County ¹	Montgomery County
Calvert County	Queen Anne’s County
Carroll County	St. Mary’s County
Cecil County	Somerset County
Charles County	Talbot County
Dorchester County	Washington County
Frederick County	Wicomico County
Garrett County	Worcester County
Howard County	

The following board is appointed:

Baltimore City ²

The following four boards are hybrid boards comprised of both elected and appointed members

Baltimore County ³	Harford County ⁵
Caroline County ⁴	Prince George’s County ⁶

¹ The Anne Arundel County Board began the transition in 2018 to an elected board, with staggered terms through 2024 when all members stand for election (HB 716, 2017).

² The Baltimore City Board is appointed by the Mayor of Baltimore (HB 562, 2017); and effective in the 2022 election, the Board will become a hybrid board with two additional members elected at large (HB 558, 2016).

³ The Baltimore County Board began the transition in 2015 to a hybrid board comprised of 4 appointed members and 7 members elected by district, effective in the 2018 election (SB 290, 2014).

⁴ The Caroline County Board began the transition in 2011 to a hybrid board comprised of 2 appointed and 3 elected members (SB 964, 2009).

⁵ The Harford County Board began the transition in 2010 to a hybrid board comprised of 3 appointed and 6 elected members (SB 629/HB 639, 2009).

⁶ The Prince George’s County Board was modified in 2013 to add 4 appointed members to its 9 elected members; 3 members are appointed by the County Executive and 1 by the County Council (HB 1107, 2013).