

March 29, 2022

Testimony for SB 908 & HB 603 – Harford County Board of Education Membership
Position: Unfavorable
Hearings on March 31, 2022

The Honorable Paul Pinsky, Chairman
The Honorable Cheryl Kagan, Vice Chairman
Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

The Honorable Venessa Atterberry
The Honorable Alonzo Washington
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

RE: Requesting UNFAVORABLE REPORT: SB 908 and HB 603 – Harford County Board of Education Membership

Dear Senate and House Committee Leadership,

Despite what you may have heard from the original sponsor of HB 603, which is now a delegation bill, the one thing that you should understand is that this bill has absolutely nothing to do with local control. Even though there exists overwhelming in-person as well as virtual testimony from residents in Harford County who don't support this bill, the Harford County Delegation, with exception of two delegates, is moving this legislative train forward and you are our only hope to stop it.

At its core, House Bill 603, and its corresponding Senate Bill 908, proposes to change the appointment authority of the Harford County Board of Education (HCBOE). Unless you render and unfavorable report, effective July 1 this bill:

1. Alters the appointment authority of the Harford County Board of Education from the Governor to the County Executive
2. Requires appointments to be with the advice and consent of at least 5 of the Harford County Council members
3. Authorizes the County Executive to fill vacancies of appointed members with the same advice and council process

The current composition of the HCBOE is 11 members (6 elected, 3 appointed, the Superintendent and student member), and all voting members are residents of Harford County. Thus, decisions rest upon the residents within Harford County. The Board of Education (BOE) within Harford County is locally controlled.

The fact that this amended bill adds text that states the county executive shall ensure to the extent possible that appointments to the County Board of Education consider the total makeup of the BOE and reflect the gender, ethnic, and racial diversity of the county is not reassuring. In fact, the current BOE make-up has a higher reflection of diversity than the demographics of the [2020 Harford County Census](#). Please see the chart below:

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Demographics of Issue	2020 Census of Harford County	Harford County Board of Education (With Gubernatorial Appointments)	Exclusively all appointed and elected members (Excludes the Student & Superintendent)
Women	51%	63.6%	54.5%
Men	49%	36.4%	27.3%
African-Americans	14.8%	27.3%	18.2%
Caucasian/White	78%	72.7%	63.6%

The current Harford County Council makeup of 7 members is 100% men, who, if this bill was in effect today, would be the body to provide advice and consent. The composition of this legislative configuration alone is over half the representation of this sex in the county. And, because it was over 25 years ago when the last woman was elected as the County Executive, it remains plausible that diverse appointments to the Harford County Board of Education would decrease under this bill mainly because of the status quo elections of White men as the county executive coupled with the promise of this bill to make the composition of the BOE equal to that of the county. Women attract diversity. As you can see from the chart above, that equates to less diversity. Therefore, negatively impacting the policies and procedures impacting the families, teachers, students, and communities of Harford County.

Altering the appointment authority has no history of successfully representing the demographics of Harford County while appointments from the Governor has a positive track record in diversity. Appointments of residents coming from the gubernatorial appointments has a greater likelihood of emphasizing diversity and balances backgrounds of people with ordinary citizens who have students in the local school system. This equity is to be valued and minimizes the entry of local politics into our school system.

Please understand that altering the appointment authority isn't about local control as all appointed and elected members are residents of Harford County. This bill has ever only been about partisan politics and serves to eventually have a totally elected school board soon. This bill is just a steppingstone. As a Harford County resident with Harford County born children, I ask that you vote unfavorably for both SB 908 and HB 603 and keep our members of the BOE in the interest of parents, students, teachers and ultimately, the community.

Let's continue to advocate to keep well enough alone. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Marla Posey-Moss

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Fallston Resident

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