

Julie C. Henn
Elected Fifth District Board Member
Board of Education of Baltimore County
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Bill: SB0656 / HB1529

Title: Baltimore County Board of Education - Alterations of Elected Member Districts and Establishment of Redistricting Process

Position: **UNFAVORABLE**

Testimony Submitted As an Individual

Date: March 25, 2025

I have served on the Baltimore County Board of Education since 2016 – first as an appointed member (2016-2018) and subsequently, as an elected member (2018-current). One of the key strengths of our board is the alignment of elected board districts with councilmanic districts. Through shared constituencies and school communities, the current shared districts foster collaboration and partnership between the Board of Education and County Council in several areas. The value of this synergy and the potential value for increased partnership are tremendous. As Board Chair (2021-2022), County Executive Olszewski and I shared the vision of greater partnership between Baltimore County Government and Baltimore County Public Schools and recognized the potential for operational efficiencies and cost savings through collaboration. The BCPS Operational Efficiency Review completed by Public Works LLC in 2021 recommended eight opportunities for shared services agreements between BCPS and Baltimore County Government including IT shared services estimated to result in a 20-25% reduction in BCPS IT spending. I continue to look for opportunities to partner with Baltimore County Government to more effectively and efficiently serve BCPS families and employees.

The alignment of elected board member districts with councilmanic districts has been essential in building partnerships with the County Council and having these conversations. Through serving a shared constituency, and ongoing dialogue about the issues and opportunities in a shared district, board members and council members are currently positioned to work together to improve the quality of education for their communities. This alignment and teamwork have led to better constituent service, more effective policymaking, mutually beneficial decision making, smarter fiscal prioritization, and ultimately, better schooling for students as we work toward common goals including new schools, increased school safety, and more effective strategic planning. I have seen firsthand the benefits of this alignment and the accomplishments as a result of teamwork across local government. As an elected board member, I rely on my partnership with my counterpart on the council to serve my district. This would not be possible without the alignment of school board and council districts which absolutely must continue.

Separate school board districts are not only unnecessary and an added fiscal burden, they are a detriment to the positive collaboration fostered by shared districts. The Board of Education composition should mirror the County Council and be updated with additional elected representation – replacing two of the current appointed seats with elected seats for the two new councilmanic districts. The Board of Education and County Council districts must remain aligned for the best interests of Baltimore County and its citizens. Please do not dismantle what is working well and what has proven to be enormously successful. For these reasons, I request that you OPPOSE SB0656 / HB1529.