

March 5, 2017

Support Delegate McMillan HB 716 Amendments

Dear Senators and Delegates:

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of the three bills introduced to change the structure of the Anne Arundel County Board of Education (BOE) to an elected or hybrid elected/appointed school board. Clearly the current system of appointing board members is broken, and I am in favor of an all-elected school board with no Student Member of the Board (SMOB).

In my opinion, the SMOB should be an advisory member only. While it is important to hear the "student voice," a high school student simply does not have the knowledge or experience to provide meaningful oversight over a \$1.1 billion operation. Can you imagine a teenager serving on the Board of Directors of a \$1.1 billion corporation? Of course not.

At a minimum, as Delegate McMillan has suggested, the SMOB should not have a vote on the budget itself. A student, no matter how smart, hard-working, or well-intentioned, simply doesn't have the knowledge or experience to understand the matters that drive budget decisions – union negotiations, procurement and contracts, revenue and expense projections, basic government accounting, etc. Without that knowledge and experience, the SMOB cannot provide effective oversight.

I also agree with Delegate Howard that if the SMOB continues to be appointed, the appointment process should be subject to open meeting and public information laws. When you take money out of the taxpayers' pockets to pay for a public operation, the taxpayers deserve the right and ability to determine how that money is being spent, how the decisions were made to spend it that way, who made those decisions, and how they were put in the position of making those decisions. Simply, my interests as a taxpayer in knowing who is deciding how my tax dollars are spent and how that person was appointed are superior to any privacy interests of a student who is voluntarily applying to be the SMOB.

The AACPS administration's opposition to open and transparent process raises my suspicions. What don't they want to come to light? The BOE is a public body overseeing a \$1.1 billion taxpayer-funded operation. The sun should shine on every aspect of that operation every single day. Nothing short of personnel disciplinary matters and advice from legal counsel should be closed to the public.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my comments to you, and please pass a bill that establishes an elected school board in Anne Arundel County. The current board is incredibly ineffective and accountable to no one. Let them be accountable to the public they serve.

Sincerely,

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