



HB45 ACCOUNTABILITY IN EDUCATION ACT OF 2019

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WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

OPPOSE

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The Board of Education of Anne Arundel County opposes **HB45 Accountability in Education Act of 2019**. This emergency Administration bill establishes the Education Monitoring Unit as an independent unit in the State to investigate, analyze, and report on upholding of teacher, student, and parent civil rights; on fraud, abuse, and waste regarding public funds and property; on child abuse, neglect, and safety; and on a range of specified matters relating to public schools and public school facilities. The unit must also establish and publicize an anonymous electronic tip program. The bill establishes an inspector general position as well as an inspector general selection and review commission within the unit.

The Board of Education of Anne Arundel County supports strong accountability for school systems – both in terms of academic success for students and sound management of school finances and facilities. Local school systems are currently held accountable in numerous ways. We are accountable to our students and our communities and regularly hold public meetings on a variety of issues, including budget and policy decisions. Local school systems are also held accountable for student academic performance which is overseen by the Maryland State Department of Education. In addition, ESSA holds states and local school systems accountable for student growth and school improvement and this is accomplished via locally developed strategies.

School systems are also held accountable for sound fiscal management practices through the Office of Legislative Audits (OLA). Under current law, OLA must conduct an audit of each local school system at least every 6 years to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the system's financial management practices. Specifically, local school systems are audited in the areas of procurement, human resources/payroll, inventory control, information technology, transportation services, food services, school board operations, financial controls, and facility planning/construction. The audits take an enormous amount of staff time and participation. For example, during the last Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) legislative audit, the auditors were in AACPS offices for 11 months.

OLA audits are only one level of school system accountability. As a local education agency, AACPS also has an annual audit conducted by independent external auditors as well as single audits for all grants. Additionally, we have periodic audits from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and Maryland State Retirement Agency. AACPS also has an independent internal auditing department tasked with providing spot audit functions over AACPS system activities, including assets and resources, fiscal matters, programs and operations, and technology. In addition, this past fall MSDE established the Office of Compliance to ensure that school systems are complying with State laws and regulations, and the Governor issued an executive order creating the Office of Education Accountability which has been tasked

with analyzing, coordinating, and providing recommendations on matters including procurement, child abuse, neglect, safety, grading, graduation requirements, assessments, educational facilities, and budgets.

As the above information illustrates, local school systems already undergo significant oversight. As such, the establishment of an Education Monitoring Unit would be unnecessary and duplicative.

Accordingly, the Board of Education of Anne Arundel County respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on HB45.