



BILL: House Bill 238
TITLE: Education – Removal of County Superintendents - Procedures
DATE: February 7, 2019
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
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House Bill 238 authorizes a county board of education to file a complaint with the State Superintendent of Schools requesting the removal of a county superintendent of schools; specifying the manner in which a county board may file a certain complaint; requiring the State Superintendent to make a decision to remove or retain a county superintendent within 90 days of receiving a certain complaint; adjusting the period within which a county superintendent may request a hearing after being removed from 10 days to 30 days; etc.

PSSAM strongly **opposes** House Bill 238.

Since 1916, Maryland law has governed the firing of county superintendents. For a local superintendent to be fired, section 4-201 of the Annotated Code of Maryland calls for the charges to be brought that he or she violated one of five standards, which are “immorality, misconduct in office, insubordination, incompetency or willful neglect of duty.” The final decision for firing is determined by the State Superintendent of Schools. For 10 decades, this law has effectively kept local school systems and superintendents out of the political fray.

PSSAM strongly believes that Maryland law has struck the right balance. The roles, responsibilities, and authority of local superintendents are clearly defined as are the policy role and authority of school boards. We believe that this balance is a major reason why Maryland continues to be among the top states in the nation in the educational performance of our students.

Sustainability in leadership is another major factor to the educational success of a school system. Local superintendents need time to demonstrate short-term results that are consistent with long-term goals. On the national level, the average term of a local superintendent is 2-3 years, which is often a major factor contributing to lack of significant progress in the school system. PSSAM is aware that Maryland is considered a model in the balance of board/superintendent roles, responsibilities and working relationships.

A disgruntled employee or a biased board member could set into action a chain of events with serious consequences. When a case involving a local superintendent is sent to the State Superintendent or arbitrator for review, it gets played out in the media and social platforms. The damage is already done and ultimately hurts morale for the entire school system including educators, students, parents, and the public regardless of the final outcome. The current law has served both local boards of education, superintendents, and the students of Maryland well.

For the reasons stated above, PSSAM strongly **opposes** House Bill 238 and urges an unfavorable committee report.