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**BILL:** House Bill 314  
**TITLE:** County Boards of Education – Voting Members – Requirements  
**DATE:** February 10, 2022  
**POSITION:** OPPOSE  
**COMMITTEE:** Ways and Means  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes House Bill 314, which proposes to address the potential for tie votes by local boards of education by mandating that each board have an odd number of members and, in the alternative, authorizing a non-board member to cast a vote. MABE opposes this bill in favor of preserving each local board's structure of governance, membership, and other organizational provisions as contained in 24 separate and distinct sections of the Education Article. MABE recognizes that these local governance structures are modified through local bills, ideally reflecting the determinations of the local board itself, with the collaborative support of the board's delegation.

MABE's top legislative priority focuses on strong support for governance authority for local boards of education to adopt education policies and school system budgets reflecting local priorities and resources. MABE supports broad discretion for local board decision-making authority in exercising legislative, judicial, and executive functions in accord with state and federal law and principles of equity and excellence for all students. Specifically, MABE advocates that state and local initiatives not reduce local board governance or budgetary authority or create unfunded mandates.

MABE believes the principle of local governance by boards of education is fundamental to a sound system of public education; and that a sound system of public education is fundamental to sustaining the well-educated citizenry essential to a flourishing democracy. By retaining decision-making authority at the local level, local boards of education can best balance educational practices, available resources to implement those practices, public input, and academic and financial accountability. State law provides that "educational matters that affect the counties shall be under the control of a county board of education" and that local boards "determine, with the advice of the county superintendent, the educational policies of the county school system." Local boards exercise this governance authority in compliance with state and federal laws and in conjunction with the policies and regulations adopted by the State Board of Education.

Again, MABE opposes this bill in favor of the local laws which are developed, and frequently amended, through the State legislative process in a manner that reflects local board positions and priorities.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 314.