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BILL: House Bill 1603
TITLE: Education – County Boards of Education – Removal of County Superintendents
DATE: March 14, 2017
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
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House Bill 1603 authorizes specified county boards of education to remove a county superintendent of schools under specified circumstances; requiring a county superintendent who has been removed to be compensated subject to the terms of a specified contract or, if no such terms exist, for the remainder of the county superintendent's term.

PSSAM strongly **opposes** House Bill 1603.

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.

Maryland Education Code provides broad authority for local superintendents to run school districts, including being the chief education officers and chief executive officers of school systems. The Code also provides additional authority and responsibilities, including suspending or dismissing teachers and administrators and specifies the authority of superintendents in disciplining students.

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.

PSSAM is aware that Maryland is considered a model in the balance of board/superintendent roles, responsibilities and working relationships. We strongly believe in the old philosophy that if it's not broken, then it doesn't need to be fixed.

Sustainability in leadership is another major factor to the educational success of a school system. Local superintendents needs time to demonstrate short-term results that are consistent with long-term goals. The Boston Public School System made significant gains under the leadership of their superintendent who stayed there for 10 years. 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.

For the reasons stated above, PSSAM strongly **opposes** House Bill 1603.