

# The Maryland General Assembly

## PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY HOUSE DELEGATION

**Pa**

For Immediate Release

June 20, 2017

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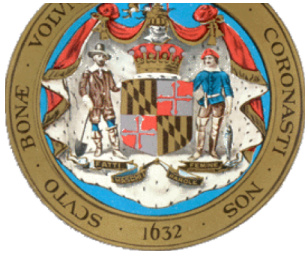
Legislative Director for Delegate Valentino-Smith

240-593-0329

Prince George's Delegation Statement on Allegations Regarding Prince George's County Public School System Grading Policy

Annapolis, MD- The Prince George's House Delegation has been monitoring the status of allegations regarding our school system and the integrity of documentation for promotion and graduation. The Delegation is pleased that the Maryland State Department of Education investigation findings dated January 30, 2017 detailed the investigation method and conclusion that there was nothing done to indicate grades had been wrongfully manipulated. Nonetheless, given the seriousness of the allegations by particular School Board Members and the need to confirm that student records provide an accurate presentation of the academic performance, the Delegation is requesting some additional review by MSDE. The Delegation has heard from some familiar with the allegations that a change in the local grading policy created confusion and disagreement among teachers, counselor, parents and students. Accordingly, to help ensure confidence in our local education system and clarification on this important matter, the Delegation has written a letter to the Maryland Department of Education to request an additional review and audit into the allegations at hand.

The letter follows:



# The Maryland General Assembly

## PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY HOUSE DELEGATION

June 22, 2017

Dear Superintendent Salmon:

The Prince George's Delegation has been made aware that some members of the Prince George's County Board of Education are alleging that student records have been altered in order to inappropriately boost graduation rates. In addition, Fox 5 News is reporting that such school board members are alleging "widespread systemic corruption" in the school district. The allegations were presented in a letter to the Governor with copy to the Maryland State Department of Education. Several school personnel and a parent have substantiated the allegations with public pronouncements on television. Given that the Maryland State Department of Education has oversight over public school districts in Maryland and the educational interests of the State, we respectfully request the resources of the Maryland State Department of Education for purposes of an in-depth audit and further investigation of such serious allegations.

The Delegation has reviewed the correspondence from the United States Department of Education and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) regarding prior complaints of alleged grade changing to boost promotion and graduation rates. We are pleased that the MSDE investigation findings dated January 30, 2017 detailed the investigation method and the conclusion that there was nothing done to indicate grades had been wrongfully manipulated. Unfortunately, we are concerned that the school personnel interviewed were not randomly selected from among key individuals but rather were selected by the CEO.

Nonetheless, student records are intended to provide an accurate presentation of the academic performance of a student. The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) requires schools to have systems of information on enrollment, attendance, and promotion. In addition, each principal is responsible for certifying annually in writing to the local superintendent the accuracy of student data maintained in the student records at the educational institution in compliance with COMAR 13A.08.02.07(D). Accordingly, given the serious nature of the repeated allegations, we believe the Department is best suited to undertake another review for compliance with its established COMAR regulations. We respectfully request that in addition to the prior investigatory methods detailed in the January report, that a data analysis using Schoolmax and student grading folders be employed for some of the schools at issue. It has come to our attention that a high level of concern exists for those schools that experienced a significant change in graduation rate or that have a significant disparity between graduation rates and the performance of students on high school standardized tests. We are also aware that the local change in grading policy may be causing both confusion and disagreement among teachers and parents and this issue could certainly be clarified through a careful MSDE review.

### Chair

Jay Walker

### Vice Chair

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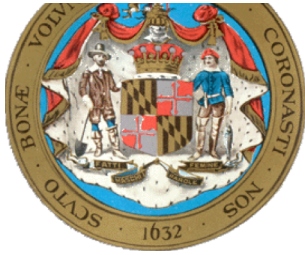
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While we appreciate that resources will be necessary for such an investigation, given the severity of the allegations we seek your assistance once again to review this important matter so that all are assured that a thorough, impartial investigation takes place. If the Department declines to dedicate resources to such an undertaking, the Delegation would appreciate suggestions for an approach to adequately respond to the concerns raised and thus bring closure to this matter.

Sincerely,

Delegate Jay Walker, Chairman

Delegate Geraldine Valentino-Smith, Chairman of the Education Sub-Committee

Cc: Dr. Kevin Maxwell, CEO, PGCPSS

Dr. Segun Eubanks, Chair, PGCPSS Board of Education

Carolyn Boston, Vice Chair- PGCPSS Board of Education

Dr. Carol A. Williamson, MSDE Chief Academic Officer

Prince George's Senate & House Delegation

Rushern L. Baker, County Executive

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