

May 26, 1992

The Honorable R. Clayton Mitchell, Jr.
Speaker of the House of Delegates
State House
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Mr. Speaker:

In accordance with Article II, Section 17 of the Maryland Constitution, I have today vetoed House Bill 396.

House Bill 396 requires each county board of education to send a copy of its annual audit to the Legislative Auditor. The bill also requires the Legislative Auditor to submit a report on the results of the audit to the Joint Budget and Audit Committee, the State Superintendent of Education, and the Director of the Department of Fiscal Services.

Current law states that the results of the audit are a matter of public record and requires that the results be reported within three months after the close of the fiscal year to the State Superintendent and the county fiscal authority. Maryland regulations require the Department of Education to review these audits and monitor the implementation of corrective action.

I understand that the intent of this legislation is to improve the fiscal accountability of the local school boards. Because accountability is the cornerstone of the Administration's education reform initiative (Schools for Success), I am supportive of that intent. However, I am concerned that the report required by this legislation is not the best way to achieve greater accountability.

The audits that are the subject of this bill are already available under current law to the General Assembly and to the Legislative Auditor. Further, these audits are available to the Legislative Auditor through the regular audit of the Maryland State Department of Education. Thus, the bill adds an unnecessary layer of paperwork at a time when I am attempting to cut waste and unnecessary bureaucracy.

As stated, I am very interested in accountability of the local school systems. Therefore, I will direct the Superintendent to take any necessary action to ensure that the files from the local boards that are maintained at the Department be kept complete and up-to-date. Further, I will direct the Superintendent to review current accountability procedures and make recommendations to me on ways that accountability can be improved. This will remain one of my highest priorities in K-12 education.

For these reasons, I have decided to veto House Bill 396.

Sincerely,
William Donald Schaefer
Governor