

#9-04

The Howard County Public School System

10910 Route 108 Ellicott City, Maryland 21042-6198 (410) 313-6600



October 29, 2004



Re: Board Member Participation in Voting; Children Enrolled in the System

Dear 

On behalf of the Ethics Panel, I am responding to your Request for an Advisory Opinion asking whether a Board member whose children attend the Howard County Public School System may participate and vote in boundary line decisions that come before the Board of Education. The Ethics Panel reviewed your request and voted unanimously that the Ethics Regulations of the Board of Education do not prohibit a Board member whose children attend the school system from participating and voting in boundary line decisions.

In its deliberations, the Panel considered all of the provisions of the Ethics Regulations, most particularly the "prestige of office" provisions, and determined that there is no prohibition on a Board member participating in boundary line decisions even when his or her children are enrolled in the school system and may be affected by these decisions. The Panel does, however, strongly recommend that any Board member whose child will or may be affected by a boundary line vote disclose that possibility on the record at some point prior to voting.

The Panel thanks you for bringing this inquiry to the Panel for a response, especially in advance of any Board action on the matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Szabo" followed by a stylized monogram "kfc".

John Szabo
Chairman
Ethics Panel

MCB/kfc

cc: Ethics Panel