

A.M.,

Appellant,

v.

HARFORD COUNTY
BOARD OF EDUCATION,

Appellee.

BEFORE THE

MARYLAND

STATE BOARD

OF EDUCATION

Opinion No. 26-25

OPINION

INTRODUCTION

A.M. (“Appellant”) who submitted caretaker status paperwork for Student X appeals the decision of the Harford County Board of Education (“local board”) finding Student X ineligible for continued enrollment in Harford County Public Schools (“HCPS”) based on Student X’s residency in Baltimore City. The local board filed a response. Appellant responded, and the local board replied.

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

This matter arises from a residency dispute concerning Student X’s eligibility to attend HCPS. In September 2025, Student X was enrolled in Edgewood High School under a caretaker status for the 2025-2026 school year based upon Appellant’s residency in Harford County. (R. 37). In December 2025, HCPS received information leading school staff and law enforcement to the Edgewood address listed in school records for Appellant (“Edgewood Address”); at that time, Appellant stated that Student X did not live at the Edgewood Address but rather she lived in Baltimore City. (R. 29, 37). As part of the investigation, Student X’s legal guardian also confirmed that Student X lived in Baltimore City. *Id.*

Following that encounter, HCPS Pupil Personnel Worker Lisa Sauer issued a December 8, 2025 letter to Appellant stating that, because Student X did not reside with Appellant at the Edgewood Address, they were in violation of HCPS’s Admission and Assignment of Students procedure and that Student X must work with Student X’s legal guardian to enroll Student X in the school of residency in Baltimore City. (R. 9). Appellant appealed to Supervisor of Pupil Personnel Worker Buzz Williams, who upheld the determination, and then to Assistant Superintendent and Superintendent’s Designee Bernard Hennigan, who also upheld it. (R. 5-6, 7-8). Appellant then appealed to the local board stating, “Student X live[s] with me,” but submitted no documentary evidence or argument; after review, the local board found that evidence supported that Student X did not reside in Harford County and, by a 6–0 vote, upheld the Superintendent’s designee’s decision in its March 16, 2026 decision. (R. 2, 37-39).

Appellant timely appealed the local board's decision to the State Board. In the State Board appeal, Appellant submitted, for the first time, a juvenile court summons dated February 2, 2026 addressed to Student X at Appellant's Edgewood address. (Appeal, Ex.)

STANDARD OF REVIEW

Decisions of a local board involving a local policy or a controversy and dispute regarding the rules and regulations of the local board shall be considered *prima facie* correct, and the State Board may not substitute its judgment for that of the local board unless the decision is arbitrary, unreasonable, or illegal. COMAR 13A.01.05.06A.

LEGAL ANALYSIS

Appellant seeks reversal of the local board's decision by asserting that the student lives with her at the Edgewood Address and by relying on a juvenile court summons she submitted with her State Board appeal.

Additional Evidence

Under COMAR 13A.01.05.04C, the State Board may receive additional evidence only if it is material and there were good reasons for the failure to offer it in the proceedings before the local board. The local board filed a response arguing that the summons is not material to domicile and, in any event, was not presented to the local board and should not be considered on appeal. Appellant's proffered juvenile court summons is not shown to be material to the question of the student's domicile and, at most, reflects mail delivery rather than the student's true, fixed, and permanent home; moreover, Appellant offered no reason—let alone good reasons—for failing to present this document to the local board. Accordingly, the State Board declines to consider the juvenile court summons and confines its review to the record before the local board. *See London S. v. Baltimore Cnty. Bd. of Educ.*, MSBE Op. No. 19-40 (2019).

Bona Fide Residency

Under Maryland State law, local boards maintain the authority to determine the geographical boundaries of the schools in their jurisdiction. Md. Code Ann., Educ., §4-109(c). Each student is required to attend a public school in the county where the child is “domiciled with the child's parent, guardian or relative, providing informal kinship care.” Md. Code Ann., Educ., §7-101. In Harford County, decisions about admissions, enrollment, and the assignment of students are governed by the HCPS Admission Procedure. The procedure requires that students establish a *bona fide* residence, which is determined by the jurisdiction where their parents or legal guardians reside. The procedure places a burden of proof on the parent or guardian to establish the student's eligibility and submit necessary documentation. (R. 10-24).

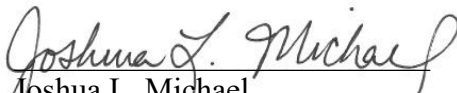
The record reflects that, when law enforcement and school officials went to the Edgewood Address in December 2025, Appellant and Student X's mother and legal guardian stated that Student X did not live there and instead lived in Baltimore City prompting HCPS to issue notice of ineligibility and direct enrollment in Baltimore City. Appellant provided no documentary evidence to the local board to establish Student X's domicile with Appellant in

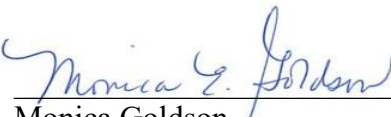
Harford County, and the local board concluded that evidence supported that Student X did not reside in Harford County but rather in Baltimore City and affirmed the Superintendent's designee's decision.

Appellant has not met her burden to show that the local board's decision was arbitrary, unreasonable, or illegal. The local board applied its procedure, credited the undisputed statements that the student did not live at the Edgewood Address, and found no evidence establishing domicile in Harford County. A reasoning mind could reach that conclusion on the record before the local board.

CONCLUSION

For the reasons stated above, we find that the local board's decision was not arbitrary, unreasonable or illegal. Accordingly, we affirm the local board's decision finding Appellant failed to establish *bona fide* residence in Harford County for Student X, thus making Student X ineligible for enrollment.

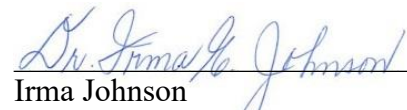

Joshua L. Michael
President

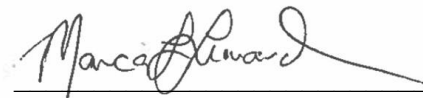

Monica Goldson
Vice-President

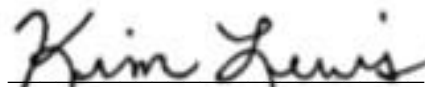

Peggy Carr


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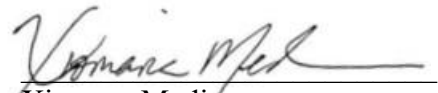

Marcy Leonard



Kim Lewis



Nicole Murray-Lewis



Xiomara Medina



Samir Paul

Absent:

James Bell

Kenny Clash

June 23, 2026