



HENRY MCMMASTER  
GOVERNOR

May 19, 2018

The Honorable Kevin L. Bryant  
President of the Senate  
State House, First Floor, East Wing  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Mr. President and Members of the Senate:

I am hereby vetoing and returning without my approval R-230, S. 1160, which seeks to authorize the Board of Trustees of the Charleston County School District to receive a monthly stipend and to set the amount of the same. Although I recognize and appreciate the time and energy that many school board members dedicate to their duties, for the reasons set forth below, I am compelled to veto S. 1160.

Under current law, the members of the Board of Trustees serve without pay but receive mileage and a per diem for meetings actually attended. S. 1160 would allow the Board of Trustees to establish compensation in an amount up to \$9,600 per year for members and up to \$10,800 per year for the board chairman. Such an increase would represent a total cost to Charleston County taxpayers of over \$87,000, which would more than cover two teachers' starting salaries or could instead be used to increase those salaries.

Article III, section 34 of the South Carolina Constitution expressly prohibits the General Assembly from enacting local or special laws "where a general law can be made applicable," S.C. Const. art. III, § 34(IX); however, our courts have held that greater deference is warranted when local legislation relates to the General Assembly's article XI authority to establish, organize, and support a system of public schools. Nevertheless, as I have previously noted in vetoing similar special legislation, there is an assortment of authorities governing South Carolina's school districts. Consequently, school districts have varying degrees of fiscal autonomy, and there is no uniform method of compensating school board members. In some school districts, board members serve without pay, whereas in others, board members receive in excess of \$15,000 per year.

I believe that decisions of this nature—concerning the operation and financial affairs of local school districts and the compensation of their board members—should be made primarily by the citizens of the affected communities and their local elected representatives. Instead of

The Honorable Kevin L. Bryant

Page 2

May 19, 2018

micromanaging matters such as the compensation of school board members through piecemeal and inconsistent special legislation, the State should allow local officials to make these decisions and trust their constituents to hold them accountable—but, again, not through constitutionally suspect special legislation such as this. Rather, like several of my predecessors, I maintain that the General Assembly should enact statewide legislation that provides uniform authority and autonomy to all of South Carolina's school districts.

For the foregoing reasons, I am respectfully vetoing R-230, S. 1160 and returning the same without my signature.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Henry McMaster", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Henry McMaster