



A Union of Professionals  
**AFT-Maryland**

5800 Metro Drive, Suite 100 • Baltimore, MD 21215-3226  
410/764-3030 • fax: 410/764-3008  
md.aft.org

Marietta English  
PRESIDENT

Kenya Campbell  
SECRETARY-TREASURER

**Written Testimony from the AFT-Maryland  
SB 275 – Education – Community and Local Accountability for Struggling Schools (CLASS) Act  
of 2020 – Innovation Schools  
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee**

**February 4, 2020**

**Oppose**

Good afternoon Mr. Chair and members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee. On behalf of the 20,000 state, municipal, and public education workers residing in Maryland, AFT-Maryland strongly opposes SB 275 and calls for an unfavorable report.

AFT-Maryland opposes this bill for a number of reasons. Firstly, representatives from the AFT-Maryland, along with dozens of other stakeholders have been engaged for nearly four years with the question of what improvements are needed in our state in order to improve education for our students, including those students who attend under-resourced schools. After much hard work and deliberation, we have come to a consensus with those stakeholders and education policy experts on a set of policy recommendations—known as the recommendations of the Kirwan Commission—that we think will be effective in bringing about the required changes and improvements. Nowhere in our recommendations, which were the product of 4 years of deliberation— did it list the changes sought after in this bill. Indeed, the Governor's own appointees to the State Board of Education hold doubts as to whether or not the drastic changes called for in this bill would do anything to improve the educational outcomes of any of Maryland's students.

Secondly, the bill is a direct challenge to the spirit of collective bargaining that has granted educators working within a school system one collective voice to address and have a democratic say in the conditions that govern their work. In Baltimore, for example, while all educators are employees of the local school board, principals are given much leeway to manage their budgets programs, and yes, even personnel. This bill calls for any changes to a collective bargaining agreement that the Innovation Plan Committee deems appropriate to be put to a vote by teachers at that one school. This will result instead with dozens, perhaps hundreds, of versions of the collective bargaining agreement occurring at vastly different schools, offering no cohesion to the local school system whatsoever. If a school administrator wishes to make changes to the collective bargaining agreement for educators, they should be able to do through the normal channels of the collective bargaining process between the school board and the local union certified to represent the given bargaining unit.

Additionally, AFT-Maryland has concerns that this bill places undue weight on whether or not a given school is succeeding based on standardized test scores. The Innovation plan proposed in the language of the bill shall be based on student outcome data, not other factors that originally went in to the state's review of that particular school (access to a well-rounded curricula, school climate surveys, etc.), which are often much better measures of school quality. In so doing, the bill once again fails to recognize the key contributing factor in the determination as to whether or not a school is providing its students with the education they deserve: namely, the fact that far too many of these schools have been under-resourced for years. Until the state chooses to change that, bills like these will continue to set our students and schools up for failure.

It is for these reasons that we ask that this committee give an unfavorable report to SB 275 – Education – Community and Local Accountability for Struggling Schools Act of 2020 – Innovation Schools.