

Testimony Concerning SB 533
Education-Teacher Certification-Montessori Schools
Submitted to Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
February 18, 2020

Position: Support

My name is Bria Pleasant and I am a proud product of Prince George's County Public Schools, specifically the Montessori Program. My Montessori journey began at Doswell E. Brooks elementary school at Pre-K 3, when Montessori was integrated into schools throughout Prince George's County, and transitioned to John Hanson Montessori School when the Montessori programs moved to two formal schools. Being promoted to high school from John Hanson is where I initially thought my journey would end.

After completing my Bachelor's degree, I sought out a Montessori teacher training program to continue my education and pursue a career in teaching. After extensive research to find the most elite program, I found Association Montessori Internationale and pursued their year-long training program at Washington Montessori Institute. In that calendar year, I received in depth curriculum instruction for grades 1-6 across all disciplines, child development theory, completed extensive practicum hours, completed oral and written examinations about theory and curriculum, was exposed to special education, its laws and adaptations tailored to Montessori, and learned how to research at a higher level.

My Montessori training brought me full circle; I returned to Prince George's County Public Schools, and to John Hanson Montessori School for my career. To my dismay, I quickly learned that all of my Montessori training would be for naught as I applied for my teacher certification. Upon receiving my transcript review after three-fourths of the full school year, I learned the only credit from my Master's Degree and Montessori training program that would be accepted for a Maryland Elementary Education 1-6 teacher certification would be Teaching Methodology. At the start of my contract in 2018, I was placed on a conditional teaching certificate for a length of two school years, with the condition that I complete 12 of the 29 credits, and 1 of the 3 exams required for this certification or I would be out of a job.

Within these past two years it has been difficult to satisfy all of these requirements. I am forced to find a balance between: upholding the authentic integrity of a Montessori program for a mixed age classroom of approximately 25 students, adapt Montessori curriculum to satisfy Prince George's county curriculum requirements and initiatives, ensure students are satisfying Maryland state standards for education, complete coursework for certification, and maintain a lifestyle outside of work.

In addition to finding this almost impossible balance, I am required to finance these courses. As a conditional teacher, my salary reflects that of an entry level teacher with one year of service. Until my teaching certificate requirements are satisfied, I will remain on this level, continuing to make it difficult to finance these courses and the tests required of me.

The passage of SB 533 would mean that I would be able to dedicate all of my energy to continuing to provide a high-quality education for my students. It would also mean that my

current and potential colleagues would be held to the same level of rigor as other national and international Montessori programs.

Sincerely,
Bria Pleasant