
**Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill 533
Education—Teacher Certification—Montessori Schools**

**Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
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1:00 PM**

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The Maryland State Education Association opposes Senate Bill 533, which would make an individual eligible for a certificate to teach students in a Montessori school after meeting certain requirements.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our 896,837 students for careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

MSEA believes that every Maryland child deserves to attend a great public school. In order to make this possible, every school must have well trained, highly qualified educators who are well compensated, professionally developed, and supported. In short, Maryland's educators need to be regarded as the professionals that they are. To ensure that the level of professionalism is either maintained or improved, we must maintain high, uniformed standards for certification.

We appreciate the concerns expressed by supporters of this legislation regarding the difficulty in meeting the staffing needs of Montessori schools in the state. We also respect their assurances that the preparation program offered by the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) is comparable to the preparation programs by which traditional public school teachers in the state are required to obtain. However, as we stated in 2018 when similar legislation was introduced, we have serious concerns around making adjustments to the current certification standards for a specialized instructional method. It is worth noting that the current preparation and certification regime in Maryland is undergoing revision due to the Kirwan Commission's recommendations found in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. These new policies seek to make both entering and completing a teacher preparation program in this state even more rigorous than was previously the case here in the state, particularly at a time when traditional preparation programs specifically and the teaching professional as a whole is struggling to attract and retain educators. Given this, we reaffirm our opposition to creating a separate and distinct certification pathway for AMI-certified teachers, even with the provision that they would be ineligible to teach in a traditional public school.

We know that Loyola University of Maryland offers a program of instruction that meets the requirements for both state certification and the specialized training required for Montessori certification. As such, we contend that there is an option currently available to Montessori



educators who seek to obtain standard certification in the state that both meets the requirements of AMI certification and state requirements for a standard professional certificate. Given that this option is available to educators who wish to teach in the Montessori tradition, we see no need to make any changes to the current state certification requirements. If Montessori educators wish to further make their case, they absolutely can and should make their case to the Professional Standards Teacher Education Board for further consideration.

Being an educator is an honor and a privilege, and its impact on our state and our country is immeasurable. The 75,000 plus members of our professional educator association want to ensure that all who choose to pursue this profession do so by meeting the highest standards for training and practice—whether they choose to teach in a traditional public school or in a specialized educational program. For this reason, **we urge the committee to issue an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 533.**