



Maryland State Board of Education

200 WEST BALTIMORE ST. / BALTIMORE, MD 21201-2595 / (410) 767-0467

February 27, 2020

Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West Wing
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: **Senate Bill 533** - Education – Teacher Certification – Montessori Schools

Dear Chairman Pinsky:

The State Board of Education (SBOE) is providing this letter of opposition concerning Senate Bill (SB) **533** - Education – Teacher Certification – Montessori Schools. Senate Bill 533 modifies the requirements for teachers who provide instruction at public and MSDE-approved nonpublic Montessori Schools by establishing a new area of certification for Montessori teachers. This bill allows an individual who has earned a bachelor's degree in any field and holds a credential from The American Montessori Society, The Association Montessori Internationale, or a program accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education, the authority to teach students in a public or nonpublic Montessori school.

The SBOE opposes this bill for the following reasons:

- Reduces the qualifications for teachers assigned to work in a public school; establishing bifurcated regulatory requirements for public school teachers;
- Increases the qualifications for teachers assigned to work in private schools (nonpublic);
- Avoids new certification requirements for elementary teachers as established by the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education; and
- Eliminates the regulatory reading credit requirements for all teachers.

Currently, teachers assigned to a public Montessori school must hold a teaching certificate in the subject area to which they are assigned. For example, if an educator is assigned to teach third grade, they would need to hold an Elementary Education certification, which allows an educator to teach English language arts, science, math, and social studies to students in grades one through six.

Conversely, teachers who work in a MSDE-approved nonpublic Montessori school are not required to hold a Maryland Educator Certificate as nonpublic schools are not bound by certification regulations. As private school employees, they are only required to hold a bachelor's degree or have 120 semester hours of college credit. It is important to mention that, in Maryland, schools that wish to offer Montessori instruction must be recognized by a MSDE-approved Montessori validating organization. Those organizations impose additional personnel requirements on teachers employed in a Montessori program. This legislation will obligate

teachers in nonpublic schools using Montessori instruction to obtain Montessori teacher certification.

Improving teacher quality in Maryland by raising teaching standards has been and continues to be a strong focus of the State Board of Education as well as the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (Commission). The Commission's 2019 final report, includes recommendations requiring that elementary teachers take courses in the core subjects they will teach in order to have deep content knowledge in the core subjects in elementary education. The SBOE concurs with this recommendation and is in the process of revising certification regulations to adhere to the Commission's vision for more rigorous teacher preparation and certification requirements. This legislation would avoid new certification regulations and neglect the need to align Montessori standards to national standards.

Additionally, the Code of Maryland Regulation 13A.12.01.11, Renewal of Certificates, requires all teachers employed in a public school to submit between 6 and 12 reading credits, depending on the subject area in which they hold certification, upon renewal of their certificate. Teachers who hold a certificate in early childhood, elementary, or special education at the early childhood or elementary level, must complete 12 semester hours of reading coursework to include:

- Processes and acquisition of reading skills;
- Best practices in reading instruction that include the cuing systems of graphphonics, semantics, and syntactic;
- Use of reading assessment data to improve instruction; and
- Materials for teaching reading in order to gain literary experience, perform a task, and read for information

Teachers who hold a certificate in a secondary subject area, a PreK-12 area, or in special education at the secondary level, must complete 6 semester hours of reading coursework to include:

- Types of reading;
- Use of reading assessment data to improve instruction;
- Skills in reading including cognitive strategies in reading;
- Reading instruction including reading aloud strategies and methods for diagnosing reading difficulties and making instructional modifications and accommodations for the student;
- Strategies for intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for reading;
- Teaching students to learn from text by applying theories, strategies, and practices in daily classroom use including additional content in types of reading using authentic texts;
- Skills in reading including processing of multimedia information and strategies to connect reading with study skills; and
- Reading instruction that integrates content area goals with reading goals including strategies for students to communicate effectively orally and in writing about what they have read in content area texts.

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The SBOE members are committed to raising the standards for Maryland teachers; therefore, for the reasons cited above, the SBOE opposes Senate Bill 533. For further information, please contact Tiffany Clark, at 410-260-6028, or tiffany.clark1@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Warner I. Sumpter".

Brigadier General Warner I. Sumpter (Ret.)
President
Maryland State Board of Education

c: State Board of Education Members
Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D., State Superintendent of Schools

