

Testimony of

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Before the

**Maryland Senate Education, Health and Environment Committee, House Appropriations Committee,  
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, and House Ways and Means Committee**

On

**SB 1000/HB 1300**

## **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

February 17, 2020

Thank you, Senator Pinsky, Delegate McIntosh, Senator Guzzone, Delegate Kaiser, and members of the Senate Education, Health and Environment Committee, House Appropriations Committee, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, and House Ways and Means Committee, for providing an opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 1000 and House Bill 1300.

I am the President and CEO of the [National Board for Professional Teaching Standards](https://www.nbpts.org/) (National Board) and a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT). The National Board is an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of the teaching profession for the benefit of all teachers and all students. The National Board's rigorous certification process defines, develops, and assesses quality teaching, with a proven connection to improved student learning and achievement. Similar to professional boards in the fields of medicine, architecture, and engineering, National Board Certification assures the public – parents, families, and communities – that the teachers who educate our children are experts in their field and have the skills to help all students learn.

A [large body of research](#) shows that NBCTs have a disproportionately high impact on student learning. Research consistently finds that NBCTs produce an additional 6-8 weeks of student learning, and recent evidence shows that preservice and new teachers benefit from access to NBCTs as mentors and coaches. New teachers mentored by NBCTs were found to produce an additional 6 ½ months of student learning. Evidence deeper learning beyond test scores is greater for NBCTs and, importantly, the impact of NBCTs is found to be even higher for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We applaud Maryland's efforts to support and incentivize Board-certification at scale. If implemented, the ambitious Kirwan Commission recommendations would make Maryland a leader in the nation on education reform. Teachers are the most important school-based factor influencing student learning, and a high-quality teacher workforce is the lynchpin for the successful implementation of all aspects of the Kirwan Commission's recommendations. Key elements of the Kirwan Commission's recommendations include attracting, retaining and supporting effective teachers for all students, including by elevating the teaching profession through a professional career ladder for teachers based

on National Board Certification. This integral component of the Commission's recommendations is the focus of our testimony.

Just as the medical profession transformed into a learning profession at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by developing standards by and for the profession, and a continuum of support to put new practitioners on a path to accomplished practice, the vision of the National Board is to engender a similar transformation in the teaching profession. This transformation will result in teaching being a field that, as in medicine, top talent is drawn to, is held in public regard and in which the public is willing to invest, and where workforce shortages are not a recurring public policy challenge.

We believe that Senate Bill 1000 and House Bill 1300 will significantly spark this type of transformation toward an elevated teaching profession that strengthens teaching quality and serves *all* students in Maryland.

A key pillar of the proposed legislation is to raise the standards and status of the teaching profession, including a performance-based career ladder and salaries and professional learning opportunities comparable to other fields with similar education requirements. The proposed teacher career ladder reflects research and lessons learned from the world's top-performing school systems, such as Singapore and South Korea, where teachers are recruited from the top 10% of their class, where they typically stay for the duration of their career, where public esteem for the profession is high, and where students are not shortchanged in their learning because of teacher shortages.

In addition to reflecting best practice from the world's top-performing school systems, the proposed Maryland teacher career ladder addresses head on one of the greatest barriers to recruiting teachers that has been identified in the United States. According to McKinsey & Company's "Closing the Gap" study on what attracts or deters U.S. college students from the top-third of their class to go into teaching, 87% of college students in the top-third of their class saw their other career options as offering opportunities to continue to advance professionally, in comparison to just 35% seeing teaching as offering such career advancement opportunities. The proposed career ladder directly combats this perception by creating a blueprint for the profession of teaching as a dynamic career where talented professionals are recognized for their skill and hard work, mitigating recurring teacher shortage challenges in the future.

At the National Board we believe that when there are concentrations of Board-certified teachers reflective of the diversity of the profession and the student population, it is possible to strengthen school culture and climate, promote equity, and positively impact the school community. We see Board certification as the expectation, not the exception.

As a standards-based assessment, there are no quotas or limits on the number of teachers that can achieve Board-certification. The assessment requires teachers to demonstrate evidence of meeting the standards for their certification area through a series of performance-based portfolio components as well as a comprehensive assessment of their content specific pedagogical knowledge. Unlike norm-referenced assessments that compare assessment takers to the performance of an "average" test-taker (sometimes referred to as grading on a curve), National Board Certification scores reflect how a candidate's submission performs against a rubric that's based on National Board Standards. Assessors, who are teachers in the candidate's certificate area, do not compare submissions to each other; they solely evaluate a candidate's component against the standards-based rubric. Each teacher who

successfully demonstrates their ability to meet the standards through the NBPTS certification process will earn the distinction of being a National Board Certified Teacher.

Moreover, numerous assurances are made that the assessment is in no way biased. This includes assurances against societal bias, pedagogical bias, presentation bias, or content knowledge bias. The National Board bias-prevention training for assessors addresses the unique aspects of portfolio and constructed-response item scoring as well as the commonalities. The bias-prevention training is designed to provide assessors with an opportunity to gain insight into personal value systems and biases, and to provide tools to disarm these biases during scoring. The bias-prevention training for portfolio scoring begins with an emphasis on the need to score to the National Board Standards, rubrics and benchmarks, evaluating only the evidence that a candidate has provided. All assessors are instructed to accept the proficiency levels established by the rubric and defined by the benchmarks. Assessors are reminded of the need to suppress personal preferences regarding content, society, pedagogy, and presentation—that scoring must be impartial, and assessors must provide careful, thorough, and fair evaluation of candidate work.

That said, awareness about and supports for pursuing Board certification have been found to be associated with achievement rates. We have found a positive correlation between candidates' awareness of state salary incentives and their achievement rates, as well as between access to candidate support programs and achievement rates. Disturbingly, we have further identified that candidates of color often have less access to these supports and awareness.

Given the importance of candidate access to support programs, a comprehensive array of supports has been developed for teachers engaged in the process. Leading states have built clear structures for candidate support to be accessible to teachers. These supports are housed at the state, districts, institutions of higher education, local teachers' associations, and non-profit organizations. A particularly strong partnership is that between the National Board and the nation's two largest unions – the National Education Association (NEA) and American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Both the NEA and AFT are on the National Board's Board of Directors and, alongside most state and local affiliates, provide significant support for teachers becoming National Board Certified.

Examples of these candidate supports include:

- School- or district-based cohorts - This [toolkit](#) provides guidance for schools or districts to design professional learning cohorts that support teachers in becoming Board-certified
- Virtual candidate support – offered through Canvas, online candidate support is available for teachers nationwide to pursue Board-certification
- [Jumpstart](#) - The National Education Association's three-day training that runs in over 40 association affiliates across the country.
- Mentorship - the National Board, through the 70+ affiliated NBCT Networks, offers opportunities for candidates to be mentored by current Board-certified teachers
- A [Candidate Center](#) website: This website provides a hub of information related to the certification process

Given the National Board's commitment to countering existing systemic inequitable access to these supports among teachers of color, of particular note is that the National Board has launched a nationwide virtual Network of teachers of color to build supports and awareness. The Network for Accomplished Minoritized Educators (NAME) provides educators from minority backgrounds with

information about incentives and candidate supports, as well as a community for supporting teachers of color in the Board certification process and as they continue to develop leadership skills.

To ensure that the vast majority of Maryland teachers, and particularly teachers in high-need schools which tend to have larger numbers of teachers of colors and early career teachers, do indeed become Board-certified, it is important to provide system-wide supports for teachers pursuing Board certification.

To-date, in Maryland, since the National Board's creation in 1987, 3,328 teachers have become National Board Certified, placing Maryland 12th in the country for its number of NBCTs. Impressively, there is wide geographic diversity. Based on our data, there are currently NBCTs with valid, up-to-date certificates in 23 of 24 school districts in Maryland. To-date, 74.8% of Maryland's NBCTs have been white (and 7.9% African American). There has been growth in recent years in the number of Maryland NBCTs of color; among the latest cohort of NBCTs certified in 2019, 66.4% were white (and 9.2% African American). These numbers should be considered alongside Maryland's overall teaching demographics, 73.5% of which is white (17.7% African American).

When incentives and supports are available, as in Prince George's County, Maryland, we observe higher numbers of teachers becoming Board-certified and higher portions of these NBCTs being teachers of color. Ninety-seven of the 311 (30%) NBCTs currently teaching in Prince George's County Public Schools identify as Black or African American

To ensure that there is a clear commitment to the notion that all Maryland teachers will have access to the types of supports described above, the National Board offers the following amendments:

- 1) We propose editing Section 6–1002 (B) (2) (V) to include the text in bold:  
“SUPPORT THE RE–ORGANIZATION OF SCHOOLS TO PROVIDE TEACHERS WITH PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND PEER COLLABORATION TIME DURING THE SCHOOL DAY BY HAVING MORE TEACHERS IN EACH SCHOOL, **INCLUDING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR TEACHERS PURSUING NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION**”;
- 2) We propose editing Section 6-1004 (B) (2) (III) to include the text in bold:  
"HAVE THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE TO MENTOR NEW TEACHERS OR LESS SKILLED TEACHERS TO ENABLE THEM TO DEVELOP THEIR SKILLS, **INCLUDING MENTORING TEACHERS WHO ARE PURSUING NBC**";
- 3) We propose editing Section 6-1004 (B) (4) (II) 1 to include the text in bold:  
"MENTORING NEWER AND STRUGGLING TEACHERS, **AND MENTORING TEACHERS WHO ARE PURSUING NBC**";
- 4) We propose the following addition to Section 6–1011 (A) (2):  
“**III. Training on how to design and support collaborative professional learning for teachers pursuing National Board Certification.**”  
(and move what is currently III and IV [train-the-trainer and advanced training in the science of learning] to IV & V).

Two further proposed amendments for the purpose of clarification of language include:

5) We propose editing Section 6-1012 (A) (1) to replace “INITIAL ATTAINMENT” with **“INITIAL COMPLETION”**

6) Finally, we note that language around “re-certification” would more appropriately refer to “maintenance of the certificate” because the National Board is transitioning to maintenance of certification in September 2020.

Each and every student deserves access to accomplished and diverse educators, and we believe the proposed legislation provides a powerful and visionary exemplar for school systems across the nation to do just that.

On behalf of the National Board, I thank you for the opportunity to submit these amendments and provide testimony of strong support for Senate Bill 1000 and House Bill 1300.