

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland House Appropriations Committee
HB 837 – Collective Bargaining - Maryland School for the Deaf –
Separate Bargaining Unit
February 10, 2021**

SUPPORT

Chair McIntosh and members of the committee, the Maryland School for the Deaf (MSD) employees should be granted the same collective bargaining rights that all other state professional service employees, k-12 teachers and staff have in Maryland. In addition, a collective bargaining agreement is needed to add teachers to the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future career ladder.

MSD is a state-run, k-12 public school. Its diverse, bilingual community provides an “exemplary education to ensure students achieve personal excellence and become responsible lifelong learners.”¹ MSD consists of two campuses and serves students from birth until high school and up to age 21.

Teachers and students use American Sign Language (ASL) for instruction in and out of the classroom including at meals, school sports, and other extra-curricular activities. All students have an Individualized Educational Programs (IEP) and every teacher is part of a team to oversee a students’ education.

Their state status as Professional Service requires advanced knowledge in a field of science or learning and a professional license or advanced degree. The teachers at MSD work in deaf/special education, have master’s degrees and must maintain MSDE certification.

Teachers and staff are members of the local union - Maryland School for the Deaf Faculty and Staff Association, Local 4828/AFT/AFT-Maryland. However, they do not have collective bargaining rights. To be included in the Blueprint along with the rest of k-12 public schools in the state, the faculty and staff at MSD must be allowed to collectively bargain with management, which will govern the terms and conditions of employment.

The faculty members at the Maryland School for the Deaf are highly qualified and specialized professionals, which should be recognized through the Blueprint as all other teachers in the state. This will be accomplished through a collective bargaining agreement.

We urge a favorable report on HB 837.

Marietta English
President

¹ Maryland School for the Deaf website:
https://www.msde.edu/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=1090021&type=d&pREC_ID=1289149