

**Written Testimony to the Budget & Taxation Committee
SB 794 - State Department of Education – Procurement and Personnel Actions
March 1, 2022**

OPPOSE

Chair and members of the committee. On behalf of the Maryland Professional Employees Council, AFT- Local 6197, representing over 5,000 professional employees for the state of Maryland, we ask for an unfavorable report on SB 794.

This bill would give the Maryland State Department of Education powers unlike any other state agency in Maryland. SB 794 clarifies that MSDE would not have to follow normal protocols and procedures in hiring, advancement, or termination. It also allows the agency to replace professional positions with temporary, contractual workers.

For decades Maryland has recognized the need to ensure our residents receive quality services from state agencies. As a state, we understand the importance of treating state employees as professionals and providing a defined path for employment and objective procedures for dispute resolution. This bill would undo that principle.

Particularly disappointing is the argument from the MSDE administration that these changes are necessary to implement the goals and objectives for improving Maryland Public education as outlined by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Nowhere in the Kirwan Commissions' recommendations did it call for the measures outlined in this bill. The opposite was true: the mantra coming from the Kirwan Commission is that as a state, we should appropriately compensate public education workers and offer them ample support opportunities to grow as educational professionals. This bill would curtail education worker rights to privatize or deprofessionalize their positions by providing them to temporary, contractual workers. We strongly call for an unfavorable report to SB 794.

Jerry Smith
President