

February 16, 2022

Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chair  
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair  
Members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building  
2 West Wing  
11 Bladen St.  
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

### **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 523**

On behalf of TNTP, a national non-profit organization that partners with school systems to help them achieve their goals for students, I appreciate the opportunity to offer written testimony in support of S.B. 523.

TNTP's mission is to end the injustice of educational inequality by providing excellent teachers to the students who need them most and by advancing policies and practices that ensure effective teaching in every classroom. We prioritize the work we do because of the overwhelming evidence that shows excellent teachers can put even students facing considerable challenges on track for success. We are invested in improved educational outcomes in Maryland, where we have operated the Baltimore City Teaching Residency (BCTR) since 2002, training over 2,500 teachers for schools in Baltimore<sup>1</sup>. In the past four years, 184 of our teachers, accounting for 60 percent of Teaching Residents, have identified as educators of color. BCTR teachers represent 1 in every 10 teachers in Baltimore City Schools and have reached over 380,000 students. This impact can be expanded to be inclusive of the strengths and assets of the immigrant community across Maryland with the passage of this bill at a moment when the education system is facing critical teacher shortages. Simultaneously, TNTP is experiencing new challenges recruiting teachers into the program to meet the needs of the city's students. Passing this bill will mean more adults who are representative of Maryland's student population and connected to their community could be on a pathway to become teachers, addressing the critical issue of teacher shortages facing communities across Maryland.

Research shows that highly effective teachers have a lifelong impact on students, boosting college attendance and future earnings. Other studies show that students of color who have teachers of the same race are more likely to be referred to gifted programs<sup>2</sup>, less likely to be suspended, and more likely to achieve at higher levels<sup>3</sup>. But students of color, students experiencing poverty, students with learning and thinking differences, and multilingual learners—all of whom bring tremendous gifts to their classrooms, but who are too often disadvantaged in our current education system—are least likely to get access to excellent teachers<sup>4</sup>. Additionally, students of immigrant backgrounds are

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the Baltimore City Teaching Residency, visit <https://tntpteachingfellows.org/baltimore>.

<sup>2</sup> Grissom, J., Rodriguez, L., and Kern, E. (2017). Teacher and Principal Diversity and the Representation of Students of Color in Gifted Programs: Evidence from National Data. *The Elementary School Journal*, 117:3, 396-422.

<sup>3</sup> Egalite, E.J., Kisida, B., Winters, M.A. (2014). Representation in the classroom: The effect of own-race/ethnicity teacher assignment on student achievement. Program on Education Policy and Governance Working Paper Series 14 (07); Gershenson, S., Holt, S. B., & Papageorge, N. W. (2016). Who believes in me? The effect of student-teacher demographic match on teacher expectations. *Economics of Education Review*, 52, 209-224.

<sup>4</sup> TNTP. (2018). The Opportunity Myth. <https://tntp.org/publications/view/the-opportunity-myth>.

overrepresented among each of those student populations facing obstacles to quality teaching<sup>5</sup>. Immigrant communities also face barriers related to citizenship that can keep caring adults who mirror students' experiences from becoming certified and effective teachers who can support Maryland's education system in increasing access to culturally and linguistically responsive classrooms and practices that will improve outcomes for these students.

We believe this bill has the potential to address the educational inequities faced by children of immigrant backgrounds by recognizing that immigrants are an asset to the state and removing a barrier that keeps them from seeking a career as a teacher. We urge the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee to move it forward. We see Maryland's education system stand to gain in two significant ways from this bill:

- 1. Improve academic and career outcomes for immigrant children:** Research has found that when undocumented youth have access to higher education and professional career opportunities, their persistence in their academic journey increases and outcomes improve<sup>6</sup>. Maryland is already helping protect the aspirations of undocumented immigrant youth by ensuring access to in-state tuition<sup>7</sup>, in-state financial aid<sup>8</sup>, and tuition-free community college<sup>9</sup>. Ensuring these students are not then barred from applying their education to seek professional licenses based solely on immigration status is a logical next step that will help the state retain the talent it has already invested in, while providing a path to socioeconomic mobility for immigrant youth. Maryland's investment in higher education coupled with the national Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program helped position the 7,470 DACA recipients<sup>10</sup> across the state to contribute to their communities across professions by providing them with the prerequisite educational qualifications and a social security number, which are often the first of multiple barriers to professional licensure. In 2021, the U.S. District Court's decision overturning DACA<sup>11</sup> shut the door to 2-year work permits and stays from deportation to a cohort of young undocumented teenagers between the ages of 13-17 who would have been eligible for the program, an estimated 8,000<sup>12</sup> of whom call Maryland home. They deserve to be met with opportunity and hope for the future, not dismay and despair because of laws that exclude them.

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<sup>5</sup> Jargowsky, P. A. (2009). Immigrants and neighbourhoods of concentrated poverty: assimilation or stagnation?. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 35(7), 1129-1151. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830903006150>.

<sup>6</sup> Ngo, F., & Astudillo, S. (2019). California DREAM: The impact of financial aid for undocumented community college students. *Educational Researcher*, 48(1), 5-18. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.3102/0013189X18800047>.

<sup>7</sup> MD Educ Code § 15-106.8- Exemption from nonresident tuition for qualified children of undocumented immigrants.

<sup>8</sup> Maryland Higher Education Commission. (2022). FAQs for the Maryland State Financial Aid Application (MSFAA). <https://mhec.maryland.gov/Pages/MSFAA-FAQS.aspx>.

<sup>9</sup> Maryland Higher Education Commission. (2022). Community College Promise Scholarship. [https://mhec.maryland.gov/preparing/Pages/FinancialAid/ProgramDescriptions/prog\\_MDCommunityCollegePromiseScholarship.aspx](https://mhec.maryland.gov/preparing/Pages/FinancialAid/ProgramDescriptions/prog_MDCommunityCollegePromiseScholarship.aspx).

<sup>10</sup> Migration Policy Institute. (2021). Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Data Tools. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-profiles>

<sup>11</sup> State v. United States, Civil Action 1:18-CV-00068 (S.D. Tex. Jul. 16, 2021)

<sup>12</sup> Migration Policy Institute. (2019). Profile of the Unauthorized Population: Maryland. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/unauthorized-immigrant-population/state/MD>.

2. **Address teacher shortages by creating an additional pool of diverse teacher candidates:** For the 2021-2022 school year, Maryland reported teacher shortages across 25 different subject matters, disciplines, and/or grades. Teacher shortages have been further exacerbated in the past few months and attending to those shortages is necessary for continued trust and functioning of Maryland's education system. Intentionally thinking through how to address those shortages by providing a diverse educator workforce can help drive the gains and provide the support students need. In February 2021, Tntp, together with The Hunt Institute, Latinos for Education, New Leaders, Teach Plus, EdTrust, The Center for Black Educator Development, and Men of Color in Education Leadership, formed a coalition dedicated to closing the educator diversity gap by 2030. Individually, our organizations have long worked to improve educator diversity and garnered modest wins along the way. The slow rate of progress on the issue has compelled us to come together to organize this effort, including in Maryland. Within the state, Black students account for over 1 in 3 students, yet Black teachers represent only 17 percent of the teacher workforce. Even more pronounced, the discrepancy in representation between Latinx students (16 percent) and Latinx educators (3 percent) means that over 31,000 Latinx students are attending schools without a single teacher who reflects their experience in their K-12 education. Significantly improving racial and ethnic teacher recruitment and retention requires looking to and better understanding the pathways and barriers to the classroom for teacher candidates of color. Addressing immigration status as a barrier to licensure for educators of color in Maryland is critical, especially given that of the over 900,000 foreign-born individuals in Maryland, 24 percent identify as Black, and 32 percent identify as Latinx. Nearly half of them are not yet citizens, but they could be part of the puzzle towards ensuring the educator workforce reflects the true diversity of Maryland's students.

We believe the comprehensive efforts required by this bill are an important codification and continuation of Maryland's efforts to improve outcomes for students regardless of immigration status. It would also be an important step towards leveraging the immigrant community as an asset by enabling schools to source educators who reflect and represent the diversity of Maryland's student population. In short, S.B. 523 will keep aspirations alive for immigrant youth in Maryland and support the state's efforts to diversify its educator workforce, helping to ensure a more equitable education.

Sincerely,



Tequilla Brownie, Ed.D.