



## HB504 COLLECTIVE BARGAINING - PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEES - AUTHORIZATION TO STRIKE

February 17, 2022

WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

### OPPOSE

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) opposes **HB504 Collective Bargaining – Public School Employees – Authorization to Strike**. This bill authorizes public school employees to engage in a strike.

The single most important strategic goal of AACPS is to ensure that every student meets or exceeds standards as achievement gaps are eliminated. We will aim to elevate all students while eliminating all gaps.

This bill would have serious ramifications on AACPS operations. State law requires that schools are in session 180 days or otherwise face certain financial penalties. Allowing public school employees to strike would certainly limit our ability to meet that 180-day threshold. Local school systems rely on our certificated educator workforce to deliver sound instruction to students on a daily basis. It is a disservice to these very students to have even a portion of the educator workforce unavailable as a result of a strike. It is ultimately the students who will suffer the consequences of this activity. If a strike were initiated by employee bargaining units, the district would face significant safety issues as well as financial impacts to provide coverage for the support staff during the strike.

It is important to note that the State of Maryland has in place – and has had in place for more than 40 years – a set of laws which mandate bargaining on behalf of public school employees. These laws require public school employers to engage in bargaining of the salaries, hours, and working conditions of public school employees whether the employee is a teacher, certificated, non-teaching, or non-certificated. The purpose of these existing laws and the Public Schools Labor Relations Board is to ensure that the needs of public school employees (in terms of salaries, hours and working conditions) are met without the need to strike. As a result, students continue to receive the appropriate education and supports they need while the parties engage in meaningful negotiation. AACPS and the employee organizations that have represented AACPS employees have successfully engaged in negotiations for more than 40 years. Even with the parties have been unable to agree, the impasse process has been available to create the necessary common ground schools and students require.

Another consideration is that a teacher strike would impact the mandatory number of days and seat hours students are required to attend each school year pursuant to Maryland law. Unless the State granted a waiver, students and teachers would be required to extend the school year which would result in additional school system and community impacts. This could result in a disruption to the continuity of instruction. Additionally, the impact this legislation would have on educational equity would likely be extremely disproportionate to English language learners, Black, Latino, low income, and special education students. Allowing public school employees to strike would have a significant impact on learning, retention, and perhaps other deliverables such as school breakfast/lunch, wraparound services, behavioral and mental health supports, and activities.

Finally, this bill would have a devastating fiscal impact on the school system. AACPS opposes unfunded mandates.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on HB504.