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TO: The Honorable Brian Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

FROM: Hannibal G. Williams II Kemerer
Chief Counsel, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

RE: SB 893 Maryland Educator Shortage Act of 2023 (Support)

The Office of the Attorney General urges the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to report favorably on Senate Bill 893. This bill, introduced at the request of Governor Moore, would comprehensively overhaul the teacher recruitment and retention process. This would include Maryland becoming a member of the Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact, which will reduce the barriers to license reciprocity among states. Additionally, the bill would establish a non-lapsing Grow Our Own Educators Scholarship Program and Fund, as well as an Educator Internship Stipend Program to help fund the education and training of future educators. The bill also proposes to alter the qualifications for the Teaching Fellows for the Maryland Program, direct the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to publicize the program at historically Black colleges and universities throughout the state, and alter the qualifications for early childhood education certification obtained through an alternative preparation program. Finally, the bill would require MSDE to establish goals for the recruitment and retention of teachers in educator preparation programs throughout the state, and establish a Maryland Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Diversity Dashboard.

Without a doubt, Maryland is facing a teacher shortage.¹ Not only have there been high rates of turnover, but the number of individuals completing teacher education programs are also in decline.² Indeed, enrollment in educator preparation programs in Maryland has been

¹ Tim Tooten, *Maryland State Education Leaders Seek Long-Term Solution to Teacher Shortages*, WBAL (Aug. 23, 2022), <https://www.wbal.com/article/teacher-shortage-maryland-long-term-solution-board-of-education/40970229#>.

² MD. STATE BD. OF EDUC., *Maryland's Teacher Workforce: Supply, Demand, and Diversity* (July 26, 2022) at 2, 22, <https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/2022/0726/TabGBlueprintAndDataDeepDiveTeacherPipelineAndDiversity.pdf>.

decreasing over the past decade, even before the pandemic exacerbated the issue.³ Currently, Maryland’s educator preparation programs do not produce enough educators to fill the rising vacancies across the state.⁴ To combat this, some school districts began waiving certification rules to keep teacher positions filled.⁵ Recruiting and retaining qualified teachers is vital to ensuring Maryland’s students meet educational goals, as this instability threatens students’ abilities to learn.⁶

Additionally, the educator workforce in Maryland is predominantly white.⁷ However, more diverse teaching has shown to improve student performance and behavior.⁸ Alternative preparation programs are typically more diverse than traditional programs and are an avenue to diversifying the workforce, and thus are deserving of additional attention.⁹ Senate Bill 893 will help eliminate financial barriers to teaching, and allow Maryland to encourage aspiring educators—particularly educators of color—to enter and remain in the profession.¹⁰

With the urgent need for qualified teachers across the state, Maryland should make teacher recruitment and retention a top priority. For the foregoing reasons, the Office of the Attorney General urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 893.

cc: Committee Members

³ *Id.* at 31.

⁴ *Id.* at 22.

⁵ Tooten, *supra* note 1.

⁶ MD. STATE BD. OF EDUC., *supra* note 2, at 2.

⁷ *Id.* at 48.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.* at 19, 48.

¹⁰ *Id.* at 61.