



AFT 340 AFL-CIO
Seton Business Park
5800 Metro Drive, 2nd Floor
Baltimore, MD 21215-3209

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 893
Maryland Educator Shortage Act of 2023
Education, Energy and the Environment
March 7, 2023
1:00pm

The Baltimore Teachers Union supports Senate Bill 893 with amendments, which would require the State Department of Education to establish specific goals for the recruitment and retention of teachers in teacher preparation programs. The bill would also transfer the administration of the Teaching Fellows for Maryland program to the Department of Education from the Higher Education Commission, and would alter the qualifications for the program. The bill also establishes the Grow Our Own Educators Scholarship Program and Fund to provide scholarships to individuals who pledge to work full-time as a teacher in the State, and the Educator Internship Stipend Program, which provides stipends to teacher preparation candidates who are completing their internships in student teaching.

The Baltimore Teachers Union represents 8,280 teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, clinicians, librarians, secretaries, community school site specialists, bus transportation aides, and many more school-based and central office support staff. We are 4 out of 5 workers in Baltimore City Public Schools, serving 75,595 students and their families. Our national union, the American Federation of Teachers, has over 1.7 million members in the United States and its territories.

The Baltimore Teachers Union believes in the importance of addressing the Maryland educator shortage. The BTU supports the intentions of this bill to make sure that we have more applicants to fill vacancies. We also believe that recruitment efforts are supported by the establishment of a diversity dashboard which helps monitor statewide goals for recruitment and retention efforts. The BTU supports the establishment of a Grow Your Own Educators Scholarship Fund and leveraging the possibilities of the Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact to make it easier for certificate holders from outside Maryland to come and teach.

Although the BTU supports SB 893, we encourage the committee to understand that proposals on this bill do not reflect comprehensive or holistic solutions to educator shortages in Maryland. The structures and supports in this bill only affect pipelines into the teaching workforce. Even so, there seem to be fundamental components missing.

The Bill's Grow Your Own Program does not appear to be built with existing Paraprofessionals and School Related Personnel in mind as essential teacher candidates. We find the obligation to repay the Grow Our Own Educators Scholarship if the recipient does not fulfill the service obligation deeply troubling. It is possible the individual is non-renewed by a county board through no fault of their own (a county board can do that for the first three years of employment)

and the individual will have to repay the scholarship. SB 893 should make it easier for PRSPs and ESPs to enter the profession and not penalize them with financial burden due to actions outside of their control.

On Page 18, line 23, we suggest inserting the following **amendment** after “medical reasons”

“, or if the recipient’s individual contract to teach is not renewed by the local board.” “If a recipient is required to repay the scholarship, the amount of payment shall be prorated based on the number of years that the recipient completed their service obligation.”

Additionally, the bill adds further requirements for Pre-K paraeducators, which could have the effect of worsening educator shortages. In its current form, the SB 893 requires Pre-K teaching assistants to hold a Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate or an associate’s degree. **We encourage an amendment** that includes a clear pathway for existing educators to meet the new requirements or be grandfathered in.

We currently do not have comprehensive data or robust data collection systems to gather exit survey data. Nor do we have data collection around retention factors for schools across the state. The bill does not address what tools are needed to address educator burnout and shortages related to licensed educators leaving because the profession is not sustainable for many.

The Baltimore Teachers Union believes that resourced schools and school communities are places where educators are retained and are able to grow in the profession and are best positioned to support our students. We encourage listening to educators to understand the pain points that cause people to exit. The Baltimore Teachers Union looks forward to working with this committee and the bill sponsors in order to ensure that comprehensive and holistic solutions are adopted in order to improve Maryland’s educator shortage.

It is for these reasons that the BTU supports Senate Bill 893 with amendments and urges a favorable report.