

**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the Maryland Senate
Education – Service Year Option Program – Establishment
(Serving Every Region Through Vocational Exploration Act of 2023) - SB 551
Education, Energy, and the Environment - For the Hearing on
February 22, 2023
SUPPORT**

Free State PTA represents over 50,000 volunteer members and families in over 500 public schools. Free State PTA is composed of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business as well as community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and family engagement in Maryland. As the state’s premier and largest child advocacy organization, Free State PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education. ***Senate Bill 551 aligns with the Free State PTA’s legislative agenda that all children have a right to an excellent equitable education.***

Senate Bill 551 establishes a service year option to recent high school graduates and other individuals with similar levels of education, who are focusing on career areas of service including health, education and climate. Free State PTA especially supports the bill requirement that the program participant would receive professional development, mentoring, job training and other support while working in high-impact service placements. These supports are part of an equitable education, adding resources to families that do not have access to these opportunities.

The education system is currently in need of more teachers¹, and this program would help encourage high school graduates to enter the education workforce. This program would support the “grow our own” movement by employing Maryland graduates with Maryland jobs in education. Also, we need more health care workers² and this program would open opportunities for recent graduates in that field as well.

This service year option gives recent graduates who are not enrolled in college or training another avenue to start a career and receive guidance as well as training. In the long run, we believe that this year should be expanded eventually to include an optional additional year for graduates who need more comprehensive experience. **Therefore, Free State PTA urges a favorable vote in support of Senate Bill 551.**

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¹ <https://www.marylandmatters.org/2022/10/06/maryland-teachers-quitting-larger-exodus-could-follow/>

² <https://www.mhaonline.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/maryland-nurse-workforce-projections-globaldata.pdf>