

**Testimony SUPPORT of Senate Bill 893
Maryland Educator Shortage Act of 2023**

**Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
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**Cheryl Bost
President**

The Maryland State Education Association strongly supports Governor Moore's Educator Shortage Act, Senate Bill 893, which seeks address the shortage of educators and inadequate pipeline to supply their ranks. This bill is one of MSEA's top 2023 legislative priorities to help address the educator shortage and excessive workloads.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

This session has created exciting and important opportunities for educators to partner with legislative leaders to build on the legislature's strong record of commitment to our public schools with policies to meet this moment and ensure that no Marylanders are left behind. Educators are focused on helping students excel after the pandemic yet are doing so in the face of excessive workload issues which are exacerbated by staffing shortages in every school building. The pipeline of educators continues to be insufficient while challenging working conditions and years of inadequate pay make it hard to retain the outstanding professionals whom students and families depend on. At the same time, many of our students require more support and services than ever.

The bill would achieve several goals that are important for ensuring public schools are fully staffed and providing needed resources to students, including establishing a paid internship program for aspiring educators. Aspiring educators are pre-service teachers, folks who are in undergraduate or graduate programs working towards getting their teaching certificates. Across the county, teacher preparation programs are experiencing declines in enrollment. A study conducted by American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education shows that at least 20 percent of institutions reported an 11 percent drop in undergraduate enrollment while surveys showed that pay and



working conditions are the top reasons why prospective college students are choosing other career paths. The cost of student loans is another large factor impacting students moving into the teaching profession. Financial investments in future educators could be the difference in turning the tide against recruitment and retention issues within the profession, especially for teacher candidates of color. When pursuing their teaching certificate, students are required to do a teaching internship, many of us know this as “student teaching.” During that year, undergraduate or graduate students are paying tuition and fees at their institute of higher education, working full-time in the public schools without pay, and unable to take another job. This is a huge financial barrier to students and frequently acts as a deterrent to getting into the education field. Like in the Educator Shortage Act, eight other states offer some form of compensation or tuition assistance for teacher candidates.

Governor Moore’s bill builds off of some local success from Western Maryland. Washington County used Maryland Leads federal grant money to pilot paid teacher apprenticeships and stipends for mentors. Under an agreement between Frostburg State University, the Washington County Teachers Association, and Washington County Public Schools, MAT teacher-candidates received \$30,000 for SY22-23 if they agreed to return to teach in a Western Maryland county for 5 years. Mentor teachers for the MAT program received \$5,000 stipends, and mentor teachers for a student teaching program received \$1,000 stipends.

The Educator Shortage Act would also set targets for the recruitment and retention of teachers in teacher preparation programs, including requiring the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to create a dashboard for educator recruitment, retention, and diversity. Further, it requires the state to join the Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact to create reciprocity among participant states and reduce the barriers to license portability and employment.

In addition, the bill reforms the Teaching Fellows for Maryland program, expands eligibility, and directs MSDE to publicize the program at HBCUs and to students who are members of groups that are under-represented among teachers. The Teaching Fellows for Maryland scholarship was designed under the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future to strengthen the teacher pipeline by providing financial incentives for future educators. Aspiring educators in undergraduate or graduate programs who commit to teach in a Maryland school after graduation can receive tuition, room, and board for up to 4 years, increasing equity and access to the profession. Unfortunately, the program requirements have proven too narrow, and the program has received inadequate promotion. The Maryland Higher Education Commission has awarded fewer scholarships than the allocated funding allows, just as pre-service teachers are leaving



preparation programs due to untenable financial pressures unique to the teaching profession. This bill would broaden the requirements and help improve the teaching pipeline.

Finally, the bill establishes the Grow Our Own Educators Scholarship Program and Fund, which includes a four-year service requirement in a public school or pre-k program and scholarships for tuition and mandatory fees. Grow Your Own programs are flourishing around the country as a way increase the number of educators in the pipeline. The beauty of these programs is that they are designed to harvest promising teacher candidates from school systems who are already working in our schools as Education Support Professionals. These are people who are already dedicated to their community and students, and need help transitioning to the teaching ranks. This is also a proven strategy to help diversity the teaching profession.

Along with full funding of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the Maryland Educator Shortage Act helps to make progress on the educator shortage that school systems across the state are struggling with. Financial investments in future educators could be the difference in turning the tide against recruitment and retention issues within the profession, while also focusing efforts to build a diverse teaching force.

MSEA strongly urges a favorable report of Senate Bill 893.