

Live Near Where You Teach Program / [HB0081]
Official Testimony
Position: **FAVORABLE**

To the Environment and Transportation *Committee*,

My name is Franca Muller Paz, and I'm a Baltimore City resident, a teacher since 2010, and have taught in Baltimore City Schools since 2013. I support House Bill 81. This bill will financially support educators by granting low-interest mortgages for the purchase of homes near where they are employed.

We need incentives for our educators, like this bill, now more than ever. In light of the severe pressures caused by the COVID crisis, teachers and paraeducators are exiting the profession in droves with huge spikes in resignations and early retirements. According to Cheryl Boast, the leader of the Maryland State Education Association, we are struggling with "vacancies in classrooms across the state and in some districts, there are hundreds of vacancies."

It is crucial that incentives for educators, like this bill, be implemented immediately. We must encourage educators to stay in the classroom in our state and cities, or we will continue to see a mass exodus of teachers, leaving our classrooms overcrowded and students without the important resources and support that educators provide.

In addition to providing a meaningful incentive that can help reverse educator shortages, Having teachers in our communities provides many direct benefits to students. Many afterschool programs rely on the voluntary participation of teachers and paraeducators. One way we can see more coaches and assistant coaches for our kids' teams, advisors for clubs, and more extra help for students before school and after school, is to reduce the commute of our educators. As one teacher told me who lives 45 minutes from our school, "Do I stay and coach this season, or do I go home and remember what my husband and kids look like?"

This disconnect between the communities of our students, and the homes of our teachers denies students educators who better understand our students, their motivations, & their interests. This give us a better chance to make the relevant curriculum that our children deserve.

As Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, says "It's important for teachers to live and make roots in the communities where they teach. Yet renting or buying a home in expensive cities is financially out of reach for most educators. Salary increases alone won't do the trick."

I respectfully urge this committee to issue a favorable report on HB0081, the Live Near Where You Teach Program and expand it to both educators who require a teaching certificate and educators who do not.

Sincerely,

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