

Testimony from Jocelyn Providence, Baltimore City Public Schools Teacher

District 45 Resident

HB085 - Education - Collective Bargaining - Certificated Employees - Class Size

Before the House Ways and Means Committee

2/1/23

Position: FAVORABLE

Good afternoon members of the committee.

My name is Jocelyn Providence and I'm a Baltimore city public school Teacher and district 45 resident. I'm writing to give my full support of HB085 for the purpose of repealing the prohibition on a public school employer negotiating the maximum number of students assigned to a class; and generally relating to collective bargaining for public school employees.

This bill removes the illegality of discussions around class size between teacher unions and school districts. Currently, it cannot be discussed as part of negotiations. Teachers unions need the ability to bring the demands from the community to the bargaining table in order to address the issues our students and families face.

Class sizes impact whether students have meaningful connections with educators and receive quality personalized instruction. Being able to discuss class sizes during negotiations could also allow for smaller caseloads for our special educators which would improve retention. It affects school counselors, social workers, nurses and psychologists by improving our retention and recruitment of those key positions and addressing the mental health crisis facing our schools.

I understand the concerns that this bill will lead to hard class size caps and increased school construction requests. I want to emphasize that **this bill is a working conditions issue** and a way to give workers more of a voice. I understand the importance of this working condition issue being addressed as someone who has taught multiple years of classroom sizes above 30 and for two years classes that were larger than 35 students. As previously stated, these working and learning conditions decrease the efficacy of high quality differentiated instruction. If you ask any of my students they will always express that they wish they had more individualized time and in classrooms that are consistently over 25 that is nearly impossible.

After talking with affiliates in other states who can negotiate class size, they say many times it leads to additional support staff in a classroom if a class hits a certain number, or additional pay for the teacher, like a special educator with a huge caseload who will leave the district if the working conditions do not improve or unless the pay improves commensurate with the workload.

This bill would not make class size a mandatory subject for bargaining. There are so many other outcomes that could come from being able to bargain class size that aren't hard caps. They include common sense discussions around blueprint implementation, creative ways to handle the pre-k expansion, retention strategies for job titles with high turnover like special educators and it could address our mental health crisis in schools by hiring and staffing related service providers adequately.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB085.

Sincerely,

Jocelyn Providence
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