

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 85
Education - Collective Bargaining - Certificated Employees - Class Size**

**House Ways & Means
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**Cheryl Bost
President**

The Maryland State Education Association stands in strong support of House Bill 85, a bill that would no longer make class size an illegal subject of collective bargaining, but rather a permissive subject.

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).

Currently, Maryland is one of only nine states – including Alaska, Indiana, Kansas, Maine, Nebraska, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Wisconsin - where class size is an illegal subject of bargaining. As an illegal subject, educators cannot bring up class size when negotiating contracts with the local board of education, even though class sizes have been a top concern for educators and parents, especially as it impacts the individualized attention educators can provide to students. School systems and educators need specific solutions to their specific problems. By making class a permissible subject of bargaining, the union and the board of education would have to agree that this would be a subject they would negotiate on—both sides would have to agree. Educators and boards of education could come up with solutions for the specific issues going on in their schools. This could include additional paraeducators in excessively large classrooms in lower grades where classroom management is a challenge. Educators and school systems should have the flexibility to discuss these issues together.



As we recover from impacts of the pandemic, class size is an even larger issue of concern. Even before the pandemic, educator retention and recruitment were at crisis levels. With the spiking of workloads and stress levels over the last two years, educator burnout and turnover are escalating, and shortages are impacting every school system in Maryland. Class size is a working condition issue that should be allowed to be brought up at the negotiation table to find solutions.

A recent MSEA survey found that 92% of Maryland educators support legislation to make class size a legal subject of bargaining. 61% of Maryland educators said they would be somewhat or much more likely to stay in the profession if class sizes could be lowered. The survey found that educators felt that if class sizes were reduced they would be able to give students more individualized attention and would be able to build stronger relationships with students.

Enrollment in teacher education programs in Maryland—and in surrounding states—has dropped significantly over the last several years, and that trend has accelerated during the pandemic. We need to take steps to reduce the burnout and turnover that are negatively impacting the profession—and driving great educators out of our schools—before the shortage crisis worsens.

In order to better serve our students and to retain educators, we must allow our educators to have a tool that allows them to have a stronger voice for themselves and our students. Removing class size as an illegal subject of bargaining will allow educators and district leaders the ability to engage in discussions and hopefully come to agreement on creative solution that best serve students.

MSEA strongly urges a favorable vote on HB 85.