

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland House Ways and Means Committee
HB 85 – Education - Collective Bargaining - Certificated Employees - Class Size
February 1, 2023**

SUPPORT

Chair Atterbeary and members of the committee, on behalf of the American Federation of Teachers - Maryland (AFT-Maryland), which represents more than 20,000 educators, government, and healthcare workers across Maryland, including the Baltimore Teachers' Union, we urge you to support HB 85.

Educators need to have the tools and a voice on the job to help students in need. One tool is the right to negotiate class size. Maryland is one of only nine states that make class size an illegal subject in collective bargaining. In these states teachers do not have a voice on this important policy that directly affects students.

Evidence demonstrates that reduced class size, particularly for early grades, has a positive effect on student achievement, especially for disadvantaged children. More teacher-student interaction allows educators to recognize the needs of individuals and customize instruction and assignments. Teachers in smaller classes have the ability to know the students and recognize problems and their special needs early.

In reduced size classes students are more likely to be on task and less likely to cause disruptions during instruction, this allows educators increase time to teach. It is especially important now while students are still recovering from the pandemic. Not all students' families had access to reliable internet and may now need more individual attention to help reach parity in academic performance to their classmates.

The pandemic also made educator retention and recruitment a crisis. Stress, burnout, and overwork are forcing teachers to leave the profession. A voice in class size could help with recruitment and retention.

Class size reduction may not be feasible across all of Maryland's schools, but in target populations it is a tool to help students who have fallen behind. In addition, to allow class size to be a subject of bargaining would give educators the ability to discuss and come to agreements on what is best for students and teachers. We ask for a favorable report on HB 85. Thank you.