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**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland House Appropriations Committee
SB 377 - Higher Education - Teacher Development and Retention Program - Definition
March 26, 2024**

SUPPORT

Chair Barnes and members of the Committee, AFT-MD asks for a favorable report on SB 377, a proposed amendment to the Teacher Development and Retention Program. This amendment, which seeks to include community colleges as eligible institutions, is a crucial step forward in addressing teacher shortages and improving educational outcomes for all students.

This bill serves as a vital initiative aimed at incentivizing individuals to pursue careers in teaching, particularly in high-needs schools and underserved communities. By providing financial support and incentives to aspiring educators, the program not only attracts talented individuals to the teaching profession but also ensures their commitment to serving in areas where their impact is most needed.

Community colleges serve as accessible pathways to higher education for a diverse range of students, including those from underrepresented backgrounds and non-traditional pathways. By recognizing community colleges as eligible institutions, we are extending the reach of the Teacher Development and Retention Program to a broader pool of aspiring teachers, thereby diversifying and strengthening our educator workforce.

Moreover, community colleges play a significant role in preparing future educators. Many offer robust education programs that provide students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and support to excel in the teaching profession. By including community colleges as eligible institutions, we are acknowledging their contributions to teacher preparation and affirming their importance within the educational landscape.

Again, we urge the committee to support for SB 377. By expanding eligibility to include community colleges, we can take a significant step towards addressing teacher shortages, improving educational equity, and ensuring that all students have access to high-quality education. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

