



Senate Bill 771

Education - Initial Teacher Certification - Requirements

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Ways and Means Committee

Date: March 27, 2024

From: Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 771. This bill adjusts the initial certification requirements for public educators to provide greater flexibility and allow prospective teachers to work in Maryland classrooms while they pursue full certification. Counties support this bill as one of several seeking to help ease the educator shortage and strengthen Maryland's school workforce.

Teachers are leaving the profession at a concerning rate nationwide, and hiring new education staff remains a significant challenge, including in Maryland. Combined with the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, local education agencies are facing a perfect storm scenario around the country as teaching and support staff positions go unfilled.

States are trying a variety of innovative policies to streamline the process of getting teachers into classrooms, and one popular method nationwide is to fast-track teacher credentials. One way SB 771 seeks to do so is by removing certain exams and required testing for initial teaching certification and by replacing some of those requirements with more flexible and equivalent skills tests.

Counties, as critical stakeholders in Maryland's public education system and partners in supporting Maryland's schools, strongly support any State effort to get more qualified staff in classrooms, ease burdens on veteran staff, and strengthen the pipeline of prospective teachers. Doing so is imperative to the success of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future – which strongly emphasizes fortifying teaching as a high-quality profession – and to the success of Maryland's students and future workforce.

For these reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS** SB 771 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.