

SHANEKA HENSON
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Ways and Means Committee

Joint Committee on
Children, Youth, and Families



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 541
Anne Arundel County - Student Loan Assistance Repayment Program for
Educators - Established

Chair Ben Barnes
Vice Chair Mark S. Chang
Room 121
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Chairman Ben Barnes and members of the Appropriations Committee,

I am writing to provide my testimony in strong support of House Bill 541, which authorizes Anne Arundel County to establish a Student Loan Assistance Repayment Program (LARP) for educators employed by the Anne Arundel County Public School System. As a co-sponsor of this bill alongside Senator Dawn Gile, I believe that this legislation is crucial for addressing the pressing need to recruit and retain qualified educators, particularly those who reflect the diversity of our student population.

The primary aim of House Bill 541 is to attract, recruit, and retain a diverse pool of educators who are committed to serving our students. By providing assistance in repaying higher education loans for educators who meet certain eligibility criteria, such as committing to five years of service, we can make teaching positions more financially attractive and demonstrate our commitment to supporting our valued educators.

It is imperative that our teacher workforce mirrors the diversity of our student population. Research consistently shows that students benefit from having teachers who share their cultural background and life experiences. House Bill 541 aligns with this research by incentivizing diverse educators to join and remain in our school system, ultimately enriching the educational experience for all students.

Furthermore, by offering loan repayment assistance, we send a clear message that we value the contributions of our educators and recognize the financial challenges they face. Teaching is a noble profession, but it often comes with significant student loan debt. This program will alleviate some of that burden, making it easier for educators to focus on their important work in the classroom.

While implementing such a program will require an increase in county expenditures for loan repayment assistance, the long-term benefits far outweigh the costs. Investing in high-quality teachers not only improves student outcomes but also strengthens our community as a whole. Similar programs implemented in other counties and at the state level have demonstrated success in attracting professionals

to high-need areas and underserved communities. House Bill 541 adapts this concept specifically for recruiting and retaining teachers in Anne Arundel County.

In conclusion, I urge the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to give House Bill 541 a favorable report. By supporting this bill, we are investing in the future of our students and our community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SHH', written over a horizontal line.

Hon. Delegate Shaneka Henson