

**FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**  
**Senate Bill 161**  
**Community Schools – Alterations**

**Senate Committee on Budget and Taxation**  
**January 24, 2024**

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**Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 161 with two amendments. This legislation would authorize each county board of education that has fewer than 40 community schools and that receives funding from the Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program for the personnel grant and the per pupil grant to, under certain circumstances, expend up to 10% of the funds distributed by the State. It would also establish other requirements to promote best practices, including developing a common needs assessment as a resource to Community School Coordinators (CSCs), adding to the objectives of a community school, and ensuring student, family, and educator voice is included throughout the support planning process.

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).

MSEA wholeheartedly supports efforts to align community school policy with proven best practices. When community schools provide targeted supports to students and community members, we see improved academic outcomes, family and community engagement, and attendance, and corresponding reductions in rates of health challenges, student discipline, and chronic absenteeism. This bill's inclusion of student, family, and educator voice is essential. Providing the option for county boards with fewer than 40 community schools to access a portion of per pupil and personnel funds increases local flexibility during implementation, and offering a common needs assessment tool to CSCs promotes best practices. We would request clarifying language affirming that while the common needs assessment may be used, it will not be strictly required, as we want to ensure that CSCs retain the option to tailor the tool to the community they serve.

We admire the goal of ensuring transparency by requiring that the completed needs assessment is shared online. Simultaneously, though, we must protect the privacy of students, families, and community members, and we would therefore urge that the plan shared online is limited to an executive summary and information about services available.

**With these considerations addressed, we would urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 161.**