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**BILL:** SB 377  
**TITLE:** Higher Education - Teacher Development and Retention Program - Definition  
**DATE:** February 14, 2024  
**POSITION:** Favorable  
**COMMITTEE:** Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
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The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, **supports** Senate Bill 377.

This bill expands eligibility for Teacher Development and Retention Program educator stipends (a pilot program that terminates June 30, 2029, and provides both initial stipends and internship stipends) to include an otherwise eligible individual who is initially enrolled in any Maryland community college.

The Teacher Development and Retention Program was created last year by the omnibus Maryland Educator Shortage Reduction Act to incentivize students to ultimately teach in a high-needs school, grade level, or content area in which there is a shortage of teachers. The pilot is to first provide a one-time stipend for in-classroom training and ultimately placing students in school settings that meet the criteria mentioned. Last year's bill allowed for participation by two community colleges, but this bill will expand eligibility to all community colleges in the State, reaching a potential audience of at least 2,700 students enrolled in teacher preparation programs each year.

Teacher shortage is a significant problem in Maryland, one we share with school districts across the nation. As we know, teacher support and teacher quality directly impact educational achievement for students. Systems and schools plagued by the lack of qualified teachers, teacher turnover, and lack of diversity in the workforce all negatively impact student learning. According to a State Board of Education presentation in July of 2022,

“Research indicates that the cost of separation, recruitment, hiring, and training has been estimated to cost between \$9,000 and \$21,000 per teacher. While teacher vacancies continue to increase, total enrollment in Maryland’s Educator Preparation programs has declined by 33%.”

This pipeline shortage is critically important and portends that our shortage will continue in the near-term.

Teacher diversity is also a challenge in Maryland. The teaching workforce has remained predominantly white, while the student demographics have grown much more diverse. From the above referenced MSDE presentation,

“Over the past 10 years, less than 30% of Maryland teachers were teachers of color. Studies show that increased diversity amongst teachers and broader sets of school professionals benefit student test-score performance and leads to improved school behaviors.”

Research has shown that alternative preparation programs are more diverse than traditional colleges of education and while the community college route is not “alternative” per se, it is an important conduit for part-time and non-traditional students to pursue teaching as a profession and very likely to help produce more diverse teacher candidates.

This legislation will complement and supplement the tenets of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. The Blueprint includes the creation of career ladders based on merit, as well as salary incentives for highly trained teachers, and incentives for teaching in low-performing schools.

For these reasons, PSSAM **supports** Senate Bill 377 and urges a **favorable** report.