

**FAVORABLE**  
**Senate Bill 771**  
**Education – Initial Teacher Certification – Requirements**

**Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment**  
**February 23, 2024**

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The Maryland State Education Association strongly supports Senate Bill 771, which would expand pathways to teacher licensure for aspiring educators by allowing candidates who pass a subject-specific exam to select one additional requirement from several entrance criteria, including a portfolio-based assessment, a 3.0 GPA, a basic skills assessment, or a rigorous 3-year induction program that would be available to conditionally certificated educators seeking full certification.

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).

To address record shortages and insufficient pipeline of educators, we must establish new pathways to teacher certification, which will also help to diversify the profession and meet the Blueprint for Maryland's Future goals for a highly qualified and diverse workforce. Too many talented teacher candidates encounter procedural, regulatory, and financial roadblocks in the path to certification.

Currently, even after completing a Maryland educator preparation program, a teacher must pass multiple certification tests that do not fully capture their potential impact, just as standardized tests are not reliable indicators of a student's academic promise. An elementary education or early childhood teacher, for example, can be required to take four standardized tests. No matter their specialty, every prospective teacher faces additional testing after completing a Maryland-approved educator preparation program.



Teacher certification exams have not been proven to strongly predict teacher effectiveness, and racial disparities in certification exam pass rates also suggest there is bias in the tests themselves.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, a report on the Praxis licensure exam showed that Black test takers received scores lower than their white counterparts even when factors like GPA and institution selectivity were comparable.<sup>2</sup> These disparities directly impact Maryland students: research has shown that a diverse teaching workforce benefits student learning. The latest data demonstrate that having even one educator who looks like a student during their academic career has dramatic effects on their short-term performance and achievement like attendance, graduation rates, whether a student takes a college readiness test, the likelihood that a student is placed in a gifted program, and reduced rates of exclusionary discipline.<sup>3</sup> Yet while Maryland's PreK-12 public school student population is more than one-third Black and 20% Hispanic, the teacher population is nearly 80% white.<sup>4</sup> This bill takes important strides to expand the teaching pipeline at a time of a historic educator shortage that is impacting school systems, educators, and students across the state.

While the Blueprint for Maryland's Future takes steps to increase staffing levels and improve diversity in the educator workforce, it also narrows certification pathways for educators. Starting in 2025, the Blueprint's pathway requires all candidates to pass portfolio-based assessments, but it's a one-size-fits-all solution that is not as equitable as possible. The proposed legislation would reduce testing roadblocks and create new pathways, including for conditionally certificated educators that wish to participate in an induction. Allowing aspiring educators to choose how to best showcase their skills is a powerful strategy to grow and diversify the teaching profession.

**We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 771.**

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<sup>1</sup> [Does Teacher Testing Raise Teacher Quality? Evidence from State Certification Requirements \(iza.org\)](https://www.iza.org)

<sup>2</sup> [Performance and Passing Rate Differences of African American and White Prospective Teachers on Praxis™ Examinations](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Teachers of Color, Culturally Responsive Teaching, and Student Outcomes: Experimental Evidence from the Random Assignment of Teachers to Classes \(edworkingpapers.com\)](https://edworkingpapers.com)

<sup>4</sup>

<https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/2022/0726/TabGBlueprintAndDataDeepDiveTeacherPipelineAndDiversity.pdf>