

## FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

### Senate Bill 189

### Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts - Development of Content Standards and Implementation

Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment  
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The Maryland State Education Association supports, with amendments, Senate Bill 189. This legislation would develop content standards for inclusive and diverse English Language Arts (ELA) to be included in the State Standards and Frameworks for ELA and require each county board of education to develop and implement age-appropriate curriculum guides for inclusive and diverse ELA, including economic diversity, equity, inclusion, tolerance, and belonging.

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).

Students of all backgrounds deserve to see themselves represented in curricula, an objective that is increasingly urgent as public schools across the country face attacks on the freedom to learn. For too long, content standards have not reflected the diversity of Maryland's student body nor been inclusive of the breadth of experiences and contributions of marginalized groups. Literature and nonfiction texts that examine issues like unconscious bias and economic disparities are important to developing students' critical thinking skills and promoting awareness of experiences different from their own. This bill rightly addresses the importance of developing curricula and resources that highlight diversity in race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, and religious beliefs.

It is critical that updated information is incorporated by revising content standards rather than by expanding the quantity of instruction required. Educators have finite instructional time in the school year, and in improving the accuracy and completeness of instructional content, we must not reduce the overall time available for each standard. We therefore recommend amending the bill to strike the requirement for the State Board to develop additional standards, and instead establish a commission. The commission should include educators and a diverse group of stakeholders that will evaluate standards holistically and develop recommendations to the State Board for the revision of standards. We would further encourage alignment with House Bill 50, which aims to create a similar commission on the study of history, culture, and civics.

Students must have access to a rich, diverse, and inclusive literary canon that accurately reflects history. **We would urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 189 if the above-referenced amendments are incorporated.**