

**SB0771-EEE\_MACo\_SUP.pdf**

Uploaded by: Brianna January

Position: FAV



## **Senate Bill 771**

### *Education - Initial Teacher Certification - Requirements*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment  
Committee

Date: February 23, 2024

From: Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 771. This bill adjusts the initial certification requirements for public educators to provide greater flexibility and allow prospective teachers to work in Maryland classrooms while they pursue full certification. Counties support this bill as one of several seeking to help ease the educator shortage and strengthen Maryland's school workforce.

Teachers are leaving the profession at a concerning rate nationwide, and hiring new education staff remains a significant challenge, including in Maryland. Combined with the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, local education agencies are facing a perfect storm scenario around the country as teaching and support staff positions go unfilled.

States are trying a variety of innovative policies to streamline the process of getting teachers into classrooms, and one popular method nationwide is to fast-track teacher credentials. One way SB 771 seeks to do so is by removing certain exams and required testing for initial teaching certification and by replacing some of those requirements with more flexible and equivalent skills tests.

Counties, as critical stakeholders in Maryland's public education system and partners in supporting Maryland's schools, strongly support any State effort to get more qualified staff in classrooms, ease burdens on veteran staff, and strengthen the pipeline of prospective teachers. Doing so is imperative to the success of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future – which strongly emphasizes fortifying teaching as a high-quality profession – and to the success of Maryland's students and future workforce.

For these reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS** SB 771 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.

**SB771\_MSEA\_Bost\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Cheryl Bost

Position: FAV

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

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

**Cheryl Bost**  
**MSEA President**

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>

**BaltimoreCounty\_FAV\_SB0771.pdf**

Uploaded by: Giuliana Valencia-Banks

Position: FAV

JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.  
*County Executive*



JENNIFER AIOSA  
*Director of Government Affairs*

AMANDA KONTZ CARR  
*Legislative Officer*

WILLIAM J. THORNE  
*Legislative Associate*

**BILL NO.:** SB 771

**TITLE:** Education – Initial Teacher Certification – Requirements

**SPONSOR:** Senator Washington

**COMMITTEE:** Education, Energy, and the Environment

**POSITION:** **SUPPORT**

**DATE:** February 23, 2024

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 771 – Education – Initial Teacher Certification – Requirements. This legislation intends to create additional pathways to teaching and will create a streamlined process for out-of-state teachers to become certified in Maryland.

SB 771 seeks to address the educator shortage sweeping Maryland and the country. Maryland Teacher Preparation Programs have seen a 33% decline in enrollment since 2012. To address this educator shortage, Maryland must expand the avenues for teacher recruitment and certification to capture the most qualified and most diverse cohort of teachers possible. This includes addressing longtime systems that exclude too many qualified people from the profession. SB 771 would complement the efforts made by the Maryland Educator Shortage Act of 2023 to expand Maryland’s teaching workforce to combat this crisis. It is to the benefit of our children to ensure that every student learns from a highly qualified teacher and from teachers who reflect the diversity of our student body.

Accordingly, Baltimore County urges a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 771 from the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at [jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov).

**SB 771 - State Board - SWA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Zachary Hands

Position: FWA





Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.  
Interim State Superintendent of Schools  
Clarence C. Crawford  
President, State Board of Education

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**TO:** Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee  
**BILL:** Senate Bill (SB) 771 – **Education – Initial Teacher Certification – Requirements**  
**DATE:** February 23, 2024  
**POSITION:** Support with Amendments

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The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) support **Senate Bill (SB) 771 – Education – Initial Teacher Certification – Requirements**, with amendments.

The State Board and MSDE are dedicated to ensuring that Maryland students have access to a highly qualified and diverse teacher workforce. In alignment with the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future Pillar II, which focuses on high-quality and diverse teachers and leaders, MSDE’s [Strategic Plan](#) provides a map for elevating the stature of the teaching profession by intentionally working to attract, recruit, and retain a highly qualified and diverse workforce; setting rigorous standards for educator preparation programs and induction; and implementing a career ladder system focused on development and growth opportunities for all educators.

MSDE supports the use of multiple measures for meeting standards, given that each measure reasonable provides an equivalent demonstration that the standard has been met. In this case, we support the use of multiple measures for teacher candidates to demonstrate the competencies required of a high-quality workforce without lowering or removing standards and are therefore supportive of what we believe to be the fundamental intent of the bill.

The State Board and MSDE are not advocating for comprehensive changes to the core structure of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. However, we believe there are opportunities in this bill to make necessary course corrections that align to the current experience with the educator pipeline and workforce in Maryland.

As introduced, MSDE has concerns with SB 771 merging the concepts related to competencies associated with basic knowledge (i.e., reading, writing, math) and pedagogy. Measures that demonstrate basic knowledge should not be conflated with measures that demonstrate teaching ability. Additionally, SB 771 amends the initial certification requirements to remove the need to demonstrate the skills required to provide evidence-based reading instruction. The State Board and MSDE are dedicated to ensuring that every teacher in Maryland is proficient in teaching reading using evidence-based instructional strategies aligned with the science of reading.

We have been collaborating with the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) leadership on a framework for recommended changes to SB 771. We appreciate AIB’s partnership and willingness to collaborate on this crucial topic and the joint effort to build this framework.

In our framework, you will see more specific considerations on various portions of the bill. We stand ready to work with the committee, the bill sponsors, the AIB, and stakeholders to discuss these amendments further.

We respectfully request that you consider this information as you deliberate **SB 771**. Please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne, Executive Director of Government Affairs, Education Policy, and Government Relations, at [Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov](mailto:Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov) or at 410-767-0504 or Zach Hands, Executive Director of the State Board, at [Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov](mailto:Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov) or at 443-915-6094, if you would like any additional information.

**SB771 MD Ed Deans Council LOI 2.23.24 FINAL.pdf**

Uploaded by: Andy Clark

Position: INFO



3300 Metzerott Road, Adelphi, MD 20783

140 South Street, Annapolis, MD 21401

## Letter of Information

### **Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee *Senate Bill 771 – Education – Initial Teacher Certification - Requirements***

Rhonda Jeter, Co-Chair, Maryland Education Deans Council, [rjeter@bowiestate.edu](mailto:rjeter@bowiestate.edu)

Barbara Marinak, Co-Chair, Maryland Education Deans Council, [marinak@msmary.edu](mailto:marinak@msmary.edu)

February 23, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a letter of information for [SB 771 \(Washington\) Education - Initial Teacher Certification - Requirements](#). We are writing on behalf of the Maryland Education Deans Council representing all twenty-two (22) Education Deans and Directors at the University System of Maryland (USM), Maryland Independent College and University Association (MICUA) institutions, Morgan State University, and St. Mary's College of Maryland. This bill repeals a provision of law that requires passing a nationally recognized, portfolio-based assessment of teaching ability as a requirement for graduation; alters the requirements for initial teacher certification; repeals the initial certification requirement to pass a rigorous State-specific examination of mastery of reading instruction and content for the grade level the individual will be teaching; and makes a more efficient and effective process for initial certification of qualified teachers and other school personnel educated or credentialed in other states.

Addressing the critical teacher shortage in Maryland could be the single most important job of every public policy maker in the State. Educating our children is the only way to preserve our democracy, invest in our prosperity, and build the kind of compassionate and caring communities we all want to live in. We support well-conceived proposals that would dislodge the logjam of regulations, and encourage creative and innovative pathways to make a career in teaching an attractive and highly rewarding career.

Without the cadre of high quality and diverse teachers called for in the Blueprint, we will fail on every other pillar of that groundbreaking law. As Linda Darling Hammond stated in her most famous 1997 landmark report, and as she restated to the Kirwan Commission during their hearings: "Teachers matter most." Who does not want the very best teacher for their child or grandchild?

SB771 addresses immediate, short-term shortages by streamlining the regulatory process and recognizing that we need to start with the teachers who are already in the classrooms, and help them become fully licensed so they can step boldly and confidently into their classrooms and their professions.

While the current bill accomplishes the short term goals, we hope that the deliberations around the implementation of this bill would include consideration of the long term commitment to Maryland's highly regarded program approval standards, which are grounded in the most compelling rigorous research about what teachers need to know and do when they assume full responsibility for children's learning. In other words, it is critical for key stakeholders to look beyond the current shortages and commit to long-term partnerships that grow a diverse, capable, and confident workforce for Maryland students. There is no quick fix to the teacher shortage. The research is clear, collaboration between IHEs and school district partners is the only evidence-based solution to addressing the current challenges facing Maryland schools.

The higher ed community is committed to partnering with local school districts to make sure that teachers know not only what to teach (their subject expertise), but also that they know how to teach (expertise in creating positive learning environments for all children). In this respect, we hope to join our practitioner colleagues in the schools to support the induction, mentoring and coaching in the early years as beginning teachers advance their skills and expertise to make data-informed instructional decisions to meet the needs of all students.

We agree that the elimination of basic skills tests (such as Praxis I), may address some of the barriers to teaching for some students. Those skills are more than made up for by the requirement for teachers to complete bachelor's degrees in their subject area. But, we also agree that performance assessments are important teaching tools that help new teachers grow.

Performance assessment reflects what teachers do every day—plan, teach, assess, reflect. Unlike a standardized multiple choice content test, it mirrors what candidates will be doing every day as teachers. Thus, it is a critical piece in the overall assessment process of teacher candidates. Without performance-based assessments, teacher candidates have not engaged in a rigorous process of data-informed instruction and reflection. It is this continuous focus on pedagogy that allows candidates to begin experiencing impactful instruction for all students. A collaborative classroom-based assessment of performance will support beginning teachers in their journey toward resilience and retention. We believe the continuation of performance assessments serves as an on-ramp to the effectiveness represented by the gold-standard of National Board Certification.

We also expect the State Department of Education to continue to hold all programs to high standards. The State Department of Education approval process, which should be constructed as a collaboration between practitioners and researchers, is the best way to strengthen rigorous and comprehensive educator preparation programs and assess and improve alternative programs so that all teachers who teach in Maryland schools are well prepared and supported.

Finally, we would embrace the opportunity to re-establish the P-20 Council that brings together all relevant constituent groups to work shoulder to shoulder to tackle the complex educational priorities that are the hallmarks of Maryland’s future as outlined in the Blueprint legislation. We all recognize that “it takes a village,” and it takes a fully engaged partnership across educational segments to create the educational foundation for all our children upon which our democracy depends.

**University System of Maryland Institutions**

|                            |                         |                        |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Bowie State University     | University of Maryland, | University of Maryland |
| Coppin State University    | Baltimore County        | Eastern Shore          |
| Frostburg State University | University of Maryland, | University of Maryland |
| Salisbury University       | College Park            | Global Campus          |
| Towson University          |                         |                        |

**Maryland Independent College and University Association Institutions**

|                            |                               |                             |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Goucher University         | Notre Dame of Maryland        | Mount St. Mary’s University |
| Hood College               | University                    | Stevenson University        |
| Johns Hopkins University   | Maryland Institute College of | Washington Adventist        |
| Loyola University Maryland | Art                           | University                  |
|                            | McDaniel College              | Washington College          |

**Other Maryland Public Institutions**

Morgan State University  
Saint Mary’s College of Maryland

**MD Letter - PJG signed.pdf**

Uploaded by: Shannon Litton

Position: INFO



February 23, 2024

The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair  
Senate Education, Energy & Environment Committee  
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: **SB 771/HB 945 – Letter of Information**

Dear Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for providing ETS with the opportunity to inform SB 771/HB 945. ETS is the world's largest educational measurement, data, and research organization operating in 200 countries and has a legacy of more than 75 years in helping governments address key challenges in education through ground-breaking innovative educational assessments. ETS's teacher licensure assessments are recognized in 40 states and we are also well known for our K-12 assessments. Globally, our GRE®, TOEFL®, and TOEIC® tests are used for university admissions and in the workplace. We have also directly assisted many governments, organizations, and associations around the world to meet their K-12, higher education and teacher licensure and other workforce assessment needs. Our 75-years of experience and widely recognized innovative and industry-leading practices, ensure that our tests are fair, reliable, and a valid measure of the content being tested. Using these scientifically backed methods, our assessments provide assurance that a professional has at least the baseline knowledge necessary for beginning practice in their profession.

This is especially critical when it comes to the profession of teaching. Teacher licensure assessments are a critical measure and control to ensure that, *at the very least*, a minimally qualified educator is placed in a classroom. The score adopted for each content area represents what a "just qualified" (i.e., minimally qualified candidate) should know for safe and effective practice. Educator testing has been considered a necessary and powerful measure to ensure that all children have access to qualified educators.

Given ETS's footprint in the states, ETS has a bird's eye view of licensure across the country. In almost all states, candidates for licensed educator roles are statutorily required to pass a series of tests before they obtain a license. The requirements vary by state, but almost all use some combination of assessments to ensure that candidates have the necessary skills needed to teach, including a functional level of understanding of the content knowledge. As research reflects, students who are assigned to teachers with higher mastery of their content, as measured by licensure tests, perform better on standardized assessments. ([Clotfelter et al., 2007, 2010](#); [Cowan et al., 2023](#); [Goldhaber, 2007](#)).





To inform debate of the bill, the following relevant information should be considered:

Definitions:

**Basic Skills Assessment:** These tests measure academic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. They are designed to comprehensively measure the skills and knowledge deemed essential for candidates entering teacher preparation programs or as a certification requirement.

ETS's basic skills assessment is the Praxis CORE assessment which measures skills in reading, writing and math. Maryland uses the Praxis CORE assessment as one of multiple options to meet Maryland's Basic Skills Assessment Requirement needed for certification. It is important to note that currently, teacher candidates who submit a minimum overall GPA of 3.0 on their most recently earned degree are not required to submit a basic skills assessment unless enrolled in a Resident Teacher Certificate program. The following website includes a list of additional options for teacher candidates to meet the Basic Skills Assessment Requirement:

[https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DEE/Certification/testing\\_info/praxis1.a.spx](https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DEE/Certification/testing_info/praxis1.a.spx)

**MA Communication and Literacy Skills Assessment:** The Massachusetts Communications and Literacy Skills Test (CLST) is a test of basic literacy skills required of all candidates for licensure in Massachusetts. It is a two-part test that covers reading comprehension and writing proficiency that is required for all educator licenses. It is not used for program entry but is a requirement for licensure. (Most states use a basic skills assessment that cover reading, writing and math. The Massachusetts assessment does not cover math).

**Subject Specific Assessments:** One of the critical attributes for beginning teachers is to understand the content area in which they teach. Subject tests measure subject-specific content knowledge, as well as general and subject-specific teaching skills, that K–12 educators need for beginning teaching in the content area in which they are teaching. They include over 90 different tests ranging from Agriculture to World Languages. Maryland currently uses the Praxis Subject Assessments for this purpose. More information can be found [here](#).

**Portfolio-Based Assessments:** In addition to content knowledge, another critical attribute of beginning teachers is performance, which is the ability to apply their knowledge in the classroom to promote student learning. A portfolio-based assessment, also known as performance assessment, measures how students apply content knowledge and teaching skills in the classroom and evaluates their ability to impact student learning through submitting tasks and artifacts based on classroom activities. These assessments are usually completed prior to graduating from an educator preparation program. Maryland has approved the Praxis Performance Assessment for Teachers (PPAT®) and edTPA for this purpose.

**Reading Assessment:** In recent years, many states have added a reading assessment requirement to ensure teachers are prepared in the science of reading. Maryland's requirement went into effect in 2019 and the Praxis Teaching Reading: Elementary (5205) test is utilized for the following certification areas:

- Early Childhood
- Elementary Education



- English to Speakers of Other Languages
- Special Education
- Reading

### **Massachusetts Policy Changes**

Recent policy changes in Massachusetts may be relevant to note when considering this legislation. In 2020, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) authorized the Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure (MTEL) [alternatives pilot](#) to study different methods for demonstrating communications and literacy skills and content knowledge. The alternative assessments are intended to increase accessibility for strong educators while maintaining standards for teacher knowledge. One of the alternatives offered was the Praxis CORE, which Maryland currently uses as one of the options for the basic skills assessment requirement. The [study](#) of the pilot found no significant difference in performance with candidates using a variety of measures for basic skills.

### **Comments and Areas Needing Clarity**

ETS recommends that the proposed legislation be clarified as follows:

*Current legislative language:*

- (1) *The Department shall determine whether the Basic Literacy Skills test [required] APPROVED for initial teacher certification is at least as rigorous as the similar examination administered by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. (See Page 2, Lines 22-24)*

*Comment:*

In light of the changes Massachusetts has been considering related to their licensure assessments, Maryland should reconsider if this is the most appropriate comparison. In addition, the Massachusetts Basic Literacy Skills test does not measure mathematics skills, which is becoming more of a focus for Maryland and across the nation.

*Current legislative language:*

- (II) *MEET ONE OF THE FOLLOWING QUALIFICATIONS: 25 1. Subject to paragraph (3) of this subsection, pass a nationally recognized, portfolio-based assessment of teaching ability; 2. PASS A BASIC SKILLS ASSESSMENT; 3. HOLD A DEGREE FROM A REGIONALLY ACCREDITED EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION AND HAVE EARNED A MINIMUM OVERALL CUMULATIVE GRADE POINT AVERAGE OF 3.0 ON A 4.0 SCALE OR ITS EQUIVALENT ON THE MOST RECENTLY EARNED DEGREE; OR 4. SUBMIT DOCUMENTATION SATISFACTORY TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SATISFACTORY EVALUATIONS FROM A LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM. (See Page 3, Lines 22-33)*

*Comment:*

If the purpose of this requirement is to ensure a candidate's basic skills, it should be noted that a portfolio assessment generally assesses content knowledge and performance of a candidate. Clarity on the purpose of each requirement and ensuring the measures align should be considered.

*Current legislative language:*

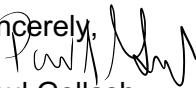
- [(ii) Pass a rigorous State-specific examination of mastery of reading instruction and content for the grade level the individual will be teaching; and] (See Page 4, Lines 6-7).*



*Comment:*

Clarify if the intention is for the state to discontinue the use of a reading assessment for certification. Maryland put this requirement in place in 2019 and while Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) scores for reading are rising, only 48% of third-grade students are proficient in reading. Most states are adding requirements to ensure their teachers are well-prepared to teach reading. This “Science of Reading” concept was strongly supported by Maryland Interim State Superintendent Carey Wright when she was Superintendent in Mississippi and it resulted in greatly increased results in reading proficiency, so it is surprising that Maryland would want to eliminate this requirement at this time.

ETS appreciates your consideration of our comments and looks forward to continuing our strong partnership with Maryland to improve teaching quality. We would be happy to respond to any questions and meet with any members who have additional questions about high quality licensure systems and how other states are addressing challenges in this space.

Sincerely,  


Paul Gollash  
Vice President, K-12 & Praxis