

FAVORABLE
Senate Bill 771
Education – Initial Teacher Certification – Requirements

House Ways and Means Committee
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The Maryland State Education Association strongly supports Senate Bill 771, which would expand pathways to teacher licensure for aspiring educators. This bill establishes additional methods for candidates to fulfill the basic skills and pedagogy requirements for initial licensure. In doing so, it will increase access to the teaching profession and reduce the impact of inequitable barriers to 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).

While the Blueprint for Maryland's Future takes steps to increase staffing levels and improve diversity in the educator workforce, current statute also narrows certification pathways for educators. Starting in 2025, the Blueprint for Maryland's Future would require that all candidates pass certain portfolio-based assessments and would limit some pathways to teaching that are currently available. This bill seeks to expand those pathways by allowing candidates to submit a 3.0 GPA from their most recent postsecondary degree, three years of satisfactory evaluations, or a passing basic literacy skills test score to meet the basic skills requirement. It would also allow candidates to complete a rigorous three-year induction with a locally developed portfolio component in lieu of certain portfolio assessments like the edTPA or PPAT.

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. 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.

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.¹ By allowing for only relatively narrow pathways, we may be screening out talented potential educators who would have a positive impact on students. 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.

This bill does not lower standards or remove tests; it simply provides additional pathways that enable aspiring educators to choose how to best showcase their skills.

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

¹ [Does Teacher Testing Raise Teacher Quality? Evidence from State Certification Requirements \(iza.org\)](https://www.iza.org/does-teacher-testing-raise-teacher-quality-evidence-from-state-certification-requirements)