

JHEANELLE WILKINS
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Vice Chair, Ways and Means
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Committee

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The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 21, 2024

House Bill 1157, Grow Your Own Educators Grant Program - Established

Dear colleagues,

I am pleased to present **House Bill 1157, Grow Your Own Educators Grant Program - Established**, which would provide grants to local school systems for their employees who pledge to serve as a full-time teacher in Maryland. These grants would open doors for school system employees, such as educational support professionals, from diverse and different backgrounds who aren't already certified to teach.

This legislation seeks to provide pathways to certification for Education Support Professionals such as Paraeducators or Paraprofessionals by providing grants to local school systems. Grow-your-own programs include dual enrollment and apprenticeship programs for high school students, programs for community members and college students, and programs for current school employees to gain additional certification.

Education Support Professionals (ESPs) are more likely to be people of color than certificated educators. We must build a teaching workforce that better reflects the diversity of Maryland's students. Research shows that ESPs who attain their teaching certification are well-equipped to become highly effective teachers and are more likely to remain in the classroom than teachers. We should consciously recruit candidates of color who reflect the diversity of students in the classroom.

House Bill 1157 would address the teacher shortages, high rates of teacher attrition, and lack of diversity among educators while creating improved academic outcomes for students. I urge the committee to give a favorable report for **House Bill 1157, Grow Your Own Educators Grant Program- Established**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jheanelle Wilkins".

Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins\