



House Bill 1157

Grow Your Own Educators Grant Program - Established

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Ways and Means and Appropriations
Committees

Date: February 21, 2024

From: Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1157. HB 1157 establishes the Grow Your Own Educators Program to provide grants to local school systems to support noncertified employees in completing a teacher preparation program in anticipation of becoming fully certified.

Counties support this bill as one of a number of similar efforts to help ease the educator shortage and strengthen Maryland's school workforce and develop teaching into a high-quality profession as envisioned by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Additionally, "Grow Your Own" programs are a core centerpiece of the Maryland State Department of Education's strategic plan.

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 (LEAs) are facing a perfect storm scenario around the country as teaching and support staff positions go unfilled.

The Grow Your Own Educators Program established by HB 1157 would give LEAs grants to pay for prospective educators' tuition, school materials, and other education-related expenses if they pledge to teach full-time in high-needs schools, grades, or subject areas in Maryland. In addition to providing financial support, the program would also help provide critical professional development for teacher candidates, like mentorship opportunities. In particular, the program seeks to support existing employees of the public education system who do not yet have full teaching credentials in becoming fully certified to teach in Maryland public schools.

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 students and the future workforce. For these reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS** HB 1157 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.