
TO: House Ways and Means Committee

BILL: House Bill (HB) 856 - Local School Systems - Educator Screening - Educator Identification Clearinghouse (School Personnel Vetting and Hiring Transparency Act)

DATE: February 25, 2026

POSITION: Support with Amendments

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) extend their support for House Bill (HB) 856- Local School Systems - Educator Screening - Educator Identification Clearinghouse (School Personnel Vetting and Hiring Transparency Act) with amendments. MSDE and the State Board value the bill’s intent to reinforce the integrity of the licensure process and to enhance student safety by requiring local education agencies (LEAs) to utilize the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) Educator Identification Clearinghouse.

The NASDTEC Educator Identification Clearinghouse, a national database, is a vital and cost-effective tool for identifying applicants who have faced disciplinary actions in other states. This tool, together with Maryland’s licensure application process, provides a cost-effective, pre-screening system that helps ensure qualified educators are placed in classrooms. HB 856 is expected to have a minimal fiscal impact on the State. With 64,191 teachers currently working in Maryland public schools, NASDTEC charges a modest subscription fee based on each LEA’s total full-time equivalency (FTE) of teachers, along with a \$500 annual membership fee per LEA. Even for the largest districts, these fees represent a reasonable investment in student safety and are well within the capacity of LEAs to implement.

While the State Board and MSDE fully support the goal of preventing individuals with revoked or suspended licenses from entering Maryland classrooms, the current language requiring a license to be fully issued before “any interaction with students” could create logistical challenges that may place additional strain on the existing teacher workforce. In light of this, the State Board and the Department request a clarifying amendment to provide provisional flexibility for educators who have passed criminal background checks and initial screenings but are awaiting administrative paperwork. Current transcripts for May graduates are often not finalized until late July or August. Strictly prohibiting interaction with students until the final license is issued would prevent new hires from:

- Providing Extended School Year (ESY) services to students with disabilities.
- Working in 11- or 12-month programs at nonpublic special education schools.
- Beginning coaching duties for fall sports, which typically commence in mid-summer.

Additionally, under existing regulations, LEA employees enrolled in approved alternative teacher preparation

programs, called Resident Teacher Programs, must complete a minimum four-week practicum before becoming a "teacher of record." Per current regulation, their license is not issued until *after* this practicum. As written, HB 856 would inadvertently bar these candidates from the classroom interaction required to earn their license.

The State Board and MSDE propose the committee strike the following language in HB 856 (p. 2, line 20-21):

(2) ENSURE THAT EACH INDIVIDUAL WHO RECEIVES AN OFFER SPECIFIED UNDER ITEM (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION:

(I) APPLIES FOR THE APPROPRIATE LICENSE AFTER THE OFFER OF EMPLOYMENT AND BEFORE THE START OF EMPLOYMENT; AND

(II) OBTAINS THE APPROPRIATE LICENSE ~~BEFORE ANY INTERACTION WITH CHILDREN.~~

With this amendment, the State Board and MSDE extend their support for HB 856. For further information, please contact Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of Government Affairs, at 443-571-5461 or Laurel.Cratsley@maryland.gov.