

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1028 Balancing the State Budget

**Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
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The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 1028, a constitutional amendment, that would allow the Maryland General Assembly to add money back into the state budget for executive agencies. This change to the state constitution would need the approval of voters on the November 2020 ballot. If passed, Maryland would join most other states in the country that allow legislatures to have almost equal budgeting power as the Governor.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our 896,837 students for the careers and jobs of the future. 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).

Maryland's current budget process is unique and gives the Governor the most budgetary power in the country. If approved by voters, this constitutional amendment would bring Maryland in line with other state legislatures that can add to the Governor's budget. The current restrictive process limits the General Assembly's ability to meaningfully affect the appropriation recommendations of the Governor. Senate Bill 1028 would better facilitate collaboration between the Governor and the General Assembly to set priorities for the State, and to provide the resources to fund those priorities.

This constitutional amendment would allow the General Assembly to better respond to the needs of the State and limit the need for complicated and less transparent budget maneuvers like the BRFA. Legislators would be able to move savings from one part of the budget to areas of great need like public education. The Kirwan Commission has determined that Maryland will need to put substantially more resources into education if our state is to help our citizens become truly successful in the very competitive national and global economies. This is the time to locate and allocate more resources to public education and ensure that our budget process is as nimble as possible. The passage of this bill helps to do just that.

Senate Bill 1028 would make Maryland's budget process more transparent and give the General Assembly the ability to ensure vital state programs are funded at the necessary levels.

MSEA urges a favorable report of Senate Bill 1028.