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Dear Maryland Legislators,

Increasing pre-K-12 teacher diversity is a national, state, and local priority as the number of teachers of color continues to decline while the number of students of color in the nation's public schools continues to increase (See: http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/11/pdf/chait_diversity.pdf). Nationally, over 40% of public schools do not have a single teacher of color on staff. In Maryland, the shortage of teachers of color is most critical for African Americans. Over the past decade, the percentage of black teachers in the state has fallen by 4.5 points to 16.6% of all teachers while black students account for about 35% of all students.

Reasons for the shortage are complex and include, but are not limited to:

1. A lack of role models in prek-12 classrooms;
2. Insufficient student preparation for college and career entrance exams;
3. Misperceptions about the profession; and
4. Tuition and programmatic costs.

While complex, these issues are not intractable and can be singularly or collectively addressed through intentional effort. HB0918 is an important step in addressing the current shortage and should be passed with all deliberate speed.

Sincerely,

Mavis G. Sanders

Professor of Education/Director, Sherman Center