

**Testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 894
Education – Community Colleges – Collective Bargaining**

**House Appropriations Committee
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The Maryland State Education Association strongly supports House Bill 894, which would give the 15,000 faculty and staff of Maryland's public community colleges the power and freedom to bargain collectively with their employer- if they choose. MSEA has supported this issue since 2014 and hopes this is the year that the bill finally makes it across the finish line.

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

House Bill 894 is a priority for MSEA during the 2021 Legislative Session, as we believe that the attainment and exercise of collective bargaining rights are essential to address the needs of all education employees. Collective bargaining provides fair, effective, and enforceable decision-making, problem-solving, and innovation between employees and employers. This bill will give workers a voice in how their community colleges work to improve both working conditions for employees and learning conditions for students.

This bill will make ensure that community college faculty and staff have the same rights has public K-12 educators. MSEA, representing K-12 public educators, has been a strong ally in the fight for funding and defending public education with local education agencies. Employees at community colleges also want to advocate and be partners in that fight for resources. They also want to have a say in their work conditions. The pandemic has shown that employees need a seat at the table when looking at health and safety considerations, and not just on economic issues. MSEA's local affiliates have gone to the bargaining table across the state with local boards of education throughout the pandemic to negotiate memorandums of understanding. Existing organizational structures proved valuable for communication and negotiations when schools had to change operations overnight at the Governor's State of Emergency declaration. Employee organization proved to be an asset for the school and the community and allowed for instant collaboration.

Maryland has long celebrated the freedom of association and the role of organized labor. The strength of organized labor is critical to protecting workers, ensuring quality, and maintaining fairness, safety, and competitive wages in the workplace. Strong employee associations are able to solve problems and



represent the needs and concerns of employees and the community to benefit everyone. As other states pass more anti-worker legislation and the Supreme Court's decisions have made it even harder for workers to organize, Maryland should be a leader for working people and pass this bill.

Including the voice of faculty and staff in the improvement of their working conditions ultimately makes it easier to recruit and retain the best possible faculty and staff for our students. This bill will give employees a voice in the decisions that shape their careers and the academic achievement of our students.

MSEA urges a Favorable Report on House Bill 894.