

Testimony in Support with Amendments to House Bill 918
Higher Education—Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program—
Underrepresented Teachers

House Appropriations Committee
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1:30 pm

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Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association is in support, with amendments, of House Bill 918, legislation that would establish the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Underrepresented Teachers under the Office of Student Financial Assistance in the Maryland Higher Education Commission.

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).

The statistics about the teacher pipeline are staggering. According to a 2019 report from Center for American Progress, "Nationally, there were more than one-third fewer students enrolling in teacher preparation programs in 2018 than in 2010. Nearly every state in the nation has experienced declining enrollment in teacher preparation, with some states experiencing drastic declines of more than 50 percent." Further disturbing, during that same period, there was a 28 percent decline in the number of students completing their teacher preparation programs.¹ According to the same report, in Maryland, enrollment in teacher preparation programs during this same period declined by more than 40 percent and completion rates declined by more than 10 percent.

¹ <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2019/12/03/477311/make-declining-enrollment-teacher-preparation-programs/> (Accessed on March 1, 2021)

The lack of well-trained, experienced teachers in our schools that serve the students who are most in need is of critical concern. The challenges many districts who have students living in high concentrations of poverty face in terms of recruiting and retaining educators have serious negative consequences not only for the students themselves but for the overall learning community as a whole. According to a report from the Economic Policy Institute,

One consequence of this greater challenge in high-poverty schools is their higher share of brand-new teachers and teachers who are new hires. ...The share of all teachers who were newly hired teachers (new to the school completing the survey) was 11.2 percent, on average, in the 2015–2016 school year. But that share was two percentage points higher in high-poverty schools (12.1 percent versus 10.1 percent in low-poverty schools). And, when we look at the share of all teachers who are not only newly hired teachers but in their first year of teaching, we see again that the share is higher in high-poverty schools (5.3 percent versus 3.7 percent). Finally, in high-poverty schools, the share of newly hired teachers who are in their first year of teaching is much higher than in low-poverty schools (39.8 percent versus just 33.8 percent). Although the differences are small in relative terms, these three measures together point to an added source of disadvantage for low-income children and the schools that serve them.²

Three things are painfully clear. First, Maryland must do a better job of professionalizing education—including paying more professionalized salaries and improving overall working conditions in our schools—if we are ever going to attract our best and brightest students to enter the profession. Second, we must do an exceptional job of training, inducting, supporting, and developing our new educators so that they can stand on the solid foundation necessary to become successful, life-long educators. Third, we must do more to ensure that we

² <https://www.epi.org/publication/u-s-schools-struggle-to-hire-and-retain-teachers-the-second-report-in-the-perfect-storm-in-the-teacher-labor-market-series/> (Accessed March 1, 2021)

dramatically reduce the educator attrition rate, especially in the schools serving our neediest students.

MSEA believes that every Maryland child deserves a world class education—one that prepares them for college, career, and life. We believe that the provisions found in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future will be a tremendous help in reaching the above stated goals stated. We also support the overarching goals of this legislation as it provides another means by which to provide financial support to educators who pursue opportunities in high-poverty schools or who seek to teach in high-need subject areas. Because our goal is to reduce teacher turnover rates in these specific schools and in these particular content areas, we propose the following amendments that we believe will greatly benefit our students and schools most in need.

1. That this program include our certificated student support personnel—school psychologists, school counselors, and school social workers.
2. Out of a need to maintain the rigor of teacher preparation programs included in the Blueprint and out of a desire to promote the longevity of our instructional staff in our schools, we ask that this program be made available only to those educators who have participated in traditional educator preparation programs via a 2- or 4-year institution of higher education.

MSEA is committed to ensuring that all of Maryland's students get the top-notch education they deserve, provided by the best and brightest educators in our profession, who are committed to the schools and communities who need them the most. Taking steps to reward Maryland educators for making a commitment to our state and our schools is one way to ensure that our state become a producer of high-quality professional educators instead of an importer of them. **As such, we urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on House Bill 918, including our proposed amendments.**