



Chair Maggie McIntosh, Vice Chair Mark S. Chang, and members of the House Appropriations Committee  
 Room 12, House Office Building  
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401

March 1st, 2021

**MAREE Favorable Testimony in Support of House Bill 918: Higher Education - Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program - Underrepresented Teachers,**

The Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education, a coalition of education advocacy, civil rights, and community-based organizations that are committed to eliminating racial disparities in Maryland’s education system, urges the House Appropriations Committee to give *HB918* a favorable report. Improving the diversity of Maryland’s educator workforce is a critical factor in reducing the inequities in Maryland’s education system. Providing loan forgiveness is a well-regarded evidenced-based policy to boost the numbers of teachers of colors, and several states such as Florida and North Carolina have already implemented or are considering adopting a loan forgiveness policy for teachers of color.

**The Benefit of a Diverse Educator Workforce and Maryland’s Current Disparities**

Access to a racially and culturally diverse teacher workforce is important for all students, including White students. However students of color in particular often thrive in classrooms led by teachers who share their racial and ethnic background.<sup>i</sup> [A Tennessee STAR class size study](#) found that Black elementary students in classes with Black teachers scored 3 to 6 percentile points higher than Black students without Black teachers, and these benefits grew every year students had a teacher of the same race.<sup>ii</sup> Data from a longitudinal study in North Carolina, found that Black students who had just one Black teacher between grades 3 and 5 were half as likely to drop out and were more likely to aspire to college.<sup>iii</sup>

Unfortunately, [the diversity of the educator workforce in Maryland](#) does not come close to matching the diversity of the student population. According to data from The Education Trust, students of color make up over 60% of the student population in Maryland, but teachers of color make up only 25% of the teaching profession.<sup>iv</sup> 10% of schools in the state do not have a single teacher of color on staff. The disparities are particularly acute for LatinX students. More than a fifth of LatinX students in Maryland attend schools that do not employ a single LatinX teacher.<sup>v</sup>

The large disparities between the diversity of the student population and educator workforce reflect Maryland’s current policies. Last year, The Education Trust did a 50-state scan to identify

model policies and practices for teacher diversity. [Maryland partially met only two of the five criteria that the report determined were best practices and did not meet any of the remaining three criteria](#)<sup>vi</sup> The passage of the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future* would help address some of the policy areas identified in the scan, and HB918 would complement the policies in the Blueprint.

## **Evidence for Loan Forgiveness and Assistance to Improve the Diversity of Maryland's Educator Workforce**

While college and graduate school debt is a crisis for all students, it is a particular burden for students of color. For example, [Black students](#) face greater hurdles when it comes to financing their college education and repaying student loans.<sup>vii</sup> Black students are more likely to borrow, borrow more, struggle with repayment, and default on their student loans than their peers.<sup>viii</sup> A 2019 [Center For American Progress study](#) found that Black and LatinX teacher candidates were more likely to have federal student loan debt than their white counterparts.<sup>ix</sup> This kind of debt, combined with the prospect of low wages compared to other professions, can make teaching [an unaffordable choice](#) for many students of color.<sup>x</sup>

For this reason, several research and policy organizations including the Learning Policy Institute<sup>xi</sup> and the Education Trust<sup>xiii</sup> have recommended loan forgiveness and assistance to improve the diversity of the educator workforce. Several states have implemented programs like the one proposed in *HB918*. [Florida's Minority Teacher Education Scholars Program](#) provides scholarships up to \$4,000 per year for each approved teacher education scholar of color who is enrolled in one of Florida's public or private colleges or universities and is admitted into a teacher education program.<sup>xiii</sup> Earlier this year, the *North Carolina Drive Task Force*, which was a group of experts convened by Governor Roy Cooper to recommend policies to improve the diversity of North Carolina's educator workforce, [released a report](#) that recommended that NC "offer affordable postsecondary access through scholarships, loan forgiveness, and tuition reimbursement programs to encourage diverse people to become teachers".<sup>xiv</sup>

## **Recommendations for Implementing HB918**

*HB918* is a positive step, but it will require careful implementation. Loan forgiveness and loan assistance programs, such as *Public Service Loan Forgiveness*, can be notoriously hard to navigate.<sup>xv</sup> Publicizing the program and making sure that teacher candidates have the technical assistance necessary to enroll in and complete the program are vital.

Moreover, there are other barriers that prevent teachers of color from entering and staying in the teaching profession besides finances. The Education Trust's two reports "[Through Our Eyes: Perspectives and Reflections From Black Teachers](#)"<sup>xvi</sup> and "[Our Stories, Our Struggles, Our Strengths: Perspectives and Reflections From Latino Teachers](#)"<sup>xvii</sup>, which explored the reasons why Black and LatinX teachers leave the profession and what schools can do better to help them stay, illuminate some of these challenges. The burden of debt—loan assistance was one of participants' explicit recommendations—was one factor, but hostile work environments,

being undervalued, a lack of autonomy and agency, as well as bad working conditions were all cited as reasons why teachers of color leave.<sup>xviii</sup>

Moreover, both Black and LatinX teachers spoke of an “Invisible Tax” that is placed on teachers of color in the form of extra pressures and responsibilities. There is often an implicit expectation that teachers of color be disciplinaries; serve as translators; mentor challenging students; manage diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in their school; and take on other roles beyond their formal classroom responsibilities. Many of these roles are important, but they are often unrecognized, uncompensated, and inequitably distributed amongst staff. These “Invisible Taxes” also push Black and LatinX teachers out of the workforce. For this reason, MAREE asks the committee to consider amending HB918 to remove the requirement that current teachers lead an extracurricular, mentor, or tutor in their school. This requirement could add to the “Invisible Tax” these teachers face, and it could be particularly burdensome for novice teachers of color. One of the best practices for supporting and retaining novice teachers is [“sheltering”](#) them by giving fewer preps, students, hours teaching, or outside-the-classroom responsibilities so they have extra time and mental energy to grow their skills.<sup>xix</sup>

### **Why MD Must Invest in Diversifying the Educator Workforce Now**

Teachers of color will be extremely important as schools shift back to in-person learning. Having teachers of color and the benefits they provide all students will be vital to ensure that students are engaged and supported. This will be particularly true for students of color, whose communities have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Moreover, data [from the Great Recession and emerging data about the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic suggests that pandemic related budget cuts could fall hardest on teachers of color who can bear the burden of reduction in force policies.](#)<sup>xx</sup> Maryland cannot afford to lose more teachers of color, and it must incentivize people of color to enter and remain in the classroom. *HB918* is a significant step towards eliminating educational inequity, and it is an investment needed to deal with the short-term and long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on our students.

Sincerely,

The Members of the Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education

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<sup>i</sup> The IZA Institute of Labor Economics, “The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers” <http://ftp.iza.org/dp10630.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> The Learning Policy Institute, “Diversifying the Teaching Profession: How to Recruit and Retain Teachers of Color”, [https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Diversifying\\_Teaching\\_Profession\\_REPORT\\_0.pdf](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Diversifying_Teaching_Profession_REPORT_0.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> The Learning Policy Institute, “Diversifying the Teaching Profession: How to Recruit and Retain Teachers of Color”, [https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Diversifying\\_Teaching\\_Profession\\_REPORT\\_0.pdf](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Diversifying_Teaching_Profession_REPORT_0.pdf)

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- <sup>iv</sup> The Education Trust, “Is Your State Prioritizing Teacher Diversity and Equity: Maryland Report Card”  
<https://edtrust.org/educator-diversity/#MD>
- <sup>v</sup> The Education Trust, “Is Your State Prioritizing Teacher Diversity and Equity: Maryland Report Card”  
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- <sup>vii</sup> The Education Trust, “Black Student Debt, Explaining the Crisis and Exploring Solutions”,  
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- <sup>ix</sup> The Center For American Progress, “Student Debt: An Overlooked Barrier to Increasing Teacher Diversity”  
<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-postsecondary/reports/2019/07/09/471850/student-debt-overlooked-barrier-increasing-teacher-diversity/>
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- <sup>xii</sup> The Education Trust, “Is Your State Prioritizing Teacher Diversity and Equity: Maryland Report Card”  
<https://edtrust.org/educator-diversity/#MD>
- <sup>xiii</sup> Florida Fund For Minority Teachers, <https://www.ffmt.org/>
- <sup>xiv</sup> North Carolina Drive Task Force, “Developing A Representative & Inclusive Vision for Education Final Report and Recommendations”
- <sup>xv</sup> Forbes, “Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Numbers Are Improving, But Is It Enough?”,  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/robertfarrington/2019/09/20/public-service-loan-forgiveness-pslf-numbers-are-improving-but-is-it-enough/?sh=3fe77fcd7431>
- <sup>xvi</sup> The Education Trust, “Through Our Eyes, Perspectives and Reflections From Black Teachers”,  
<https://edtrust.org/resource/through-our-eyes/>
- <sup>xvii</sup> The Education Trust, “Our Stories, Our Struggles, Our Strengths: Perspectives and Reflections From Latino Teachers”, <https://edtrust.org/resource/our-stories-our-struggles-our-strengths/>
- <sup>xviii</sup> The Education Trust, “If You Listen We Will Stay; Why Teachers of Color Leave and How to Disrupt Teacher Turnover”, <https://edtrustmain.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/15140833/If-You-Listen-We-Will-Stay-Why-Teachers-of-Color-Leave-and-How-to-Disrupt-Teacher-Turnover-2019-September.pdf>
- <sup>xix</sup> Education Resource Strategies, “The Growing Great Teachers Toolkit”,  
<https://www.erstrategies.org/cms/files/4047-growing-great-teachers--new-teacher-toolkit-overview.pdf>
- <sup>xx</sup> Education Week, “How COVID-19 Is Hurting Teacher Diversity”, <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/how-covid-19-is-hurting-teacher-diversity/2020/09>