

## Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 644

State Officials—Appointments—Advice and Consent of the Senate

Senate Health, Education, and Environmental Affairs Committee

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1:00 pm

Tina N. Dove, M.Ed.

Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 644, legislation that would (among other things) require the State Superintendent of Schools be appointed by the State Board of Education with the advice and consent of the Maryland Senate.

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).

As we grapple with the immeasurable challenges resulting from the global COVID-19 pandemic, the significant changes to education policy and funding in our state that will be enacted should the veto of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future be overturned, and the impact brought by the retirement of the current state superintendent, MSEA members are clear: the choice of the next state superintendent is critically important. We believe very strongly that this person needs to be someone with extensive educational experience—in the classroom, the school building, and the district office—who has a proven track record of being a strong, effective leader who knows and understands how to bring about policy and regulatory change as well as how best to successfully implement said change at all levels of education. To be successful, the next state superintendent of schools must possess the theoretical knowledge and practical experience which will enable them to effectively serve as the lead educator in our state. This leader will also have to command the confidence, trust and respect of the rank-and-file educators across the state, the bureaucratic staff inherited at the Department, and the elected officials and members of the public. Senate Bill 644 puts Maryland on the definitive path toward ensuring our



state's next educational leader is well qualified and best suited to lead our state through that which lies ahead.

At a time when we've seen the recent departure of the most unqualified individual ever to lead the U.S. Department of Education, and when the current membership of the State Board of Education (with the exception of the appointed teacher and parent members) being composed predominantly of advocates for private, religious, and home-schools who lack any first-hand experience teaching or leading in public schools, it has never been more important to ensure that our state's chief public education advocate and leader be someone with impeccable education experience and credentials, proven educational leadership skills, and unwavering support for Maryland's public schools and public school educators. Incorporating the Senate into the approval process for our future school superintendent is not only reasonable and sound policy, it is fully compatible with the process currently utilized for appointing the leaders of other principle state agencies that comprise the Governor's executive leadership team, all of whom must also be appointed with the advice and consent of the Senate.

With the enactment of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, our state is about to embark upon an historic, multifaceted implementation process—one that will involve educators across the state; various local and state elected officials and agencies; and a significant amount of state and federal tax dollars. This is a consequential endeavor. MSEA unequivocally believes that the educator selected to lead our state department of education and our local school system leaders, educators, and staff possess impeccable credentials, have a track record of effectiveness as both an educator and a leader, and have the full faith and confidence of our state elected officials. We are confident that the passage of this legislation will help make this a reality. **For this reason, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 644.**