

Testimony SUPPORT of House Bill 394
Public Schools – Fees for Summer School Courses – Prohibition

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
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The Maryland State Education Association supports HB 394. The legislation would prohibit LEAs from charging summer school fees of students who meet certain conditions.

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).

Under this legislation, a student would be eligible for this exemption if they: 1) attend school in the district; 2) require a summer school course in order to graduate; and 3) previously took said course and did not successfully complete it.

For many students who fall into this category, paying to repeat a needed summer school course could be cost prohibitive, particularly if the student comes from a family with a low-income. One's family's financial limitations should not serve as a barrier to their high school graduation, especially after encountering academic obstacles due to the pandemic. Every effort should be made on the part of the school and the district to ensure that all students successfully complete their high school careers.

Currently, the cost for taking a summer school course varies from district to district, with some charging hundreds of dollars per course. Some offer discounted tuition for students who are FARMS eligible, which can serve a tremendous help. Even still, the discounted cost could remain a financial hardship for too many families.

As educators and LEAs are working hard to make up for the learning loss caused by the pandemic, the General Assembly should also consider the cost to LEAs when implementing this necessary legislation. The State should make every effort to help keep these budgets whole during this time.

Ensuring that Maryland's students receive a free public education is the responsibility of the state legislature and the taxpayers. **MSEA urges a Favorable Report on House Bill 394.**