

Testimony in Support of House Bill 465
State Superintendent of Schools—Qualifications and Senate Confirmation

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
March 24, 2021
1:00 pm

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Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 465, legislation that would require the State Superintendent be appointed with the advice and consent of the Maryland Senate; amend the qualifications of the candidate for the position; and prohibit recent members of the State Board of Education from being appointed to the position until a period of time between their service on the Board and their appointment to the position has passed.

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).

One of the most significant factors determining how well our students do in school is the quality of the educator who stands in front of them every day. One of the most significant factors in the success of classroom teachers is the quality of the leader running their school building. School leaders, and their ability to be effective, can be helped or harmed by the superintendent in charge of their district. The leadership of our district superintendents is directly impacted by the state leader charged with helping to shape and guide their district leaders' overall efforts via regulatory support, policy change, administrative advocacy, and educational leadership. In short, the person selected to lead the state's educational system matters a great deal. To be successful, the state superintendent of schools needs to possess the theoretical knowledge and practical experience which will enable her/him 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.



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. House Bill 465 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.

MSEA requests a favorable report on House Bill 465.