

**Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 746  
Education – Community Colleges – Collective Bargaining**

**Senate Finance Committee  
March 4, 2021**

**Samantha Zwerling  
Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association strongly supports Senate Bill 746, which would give the 15,000 faculty and staff of Maryland’s public community colleges the power and freedom to bargain collectively with their employer- if they choose. MSEA has supported this issue since 2014 and hopes this is the year that the bill finally makes it across the finish line.

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).

Senate Bill 746 is a priority for MSEA during the 2021 Legislative Session, as we believe that the attainment and exercise of collective bargaining rights are essential to address the needs of all education employees. Collective bargaining provides fair, effective, and enforceable decision-making, problem-solving, and innovation between employees and employers. This bill will give workers a voice in how their community colleges work to improve both working conditions for employees and learning conditions for students. Senate Bill 746 represents the best tradition of academia—giving employees the right to debate, discuss and move forward based on the evidence before them about whether to join a union.

This bill will ensure that community college faculty and staff have the same rights as public K-12 educators. MSEA, representing K-12 public educators, has been a strong ally in the fight for funding and defending public education alongside local education agencies. Employees at community colleges also want to advocate and be partners in that fight for resources. They also want to have a say in their work conditions.

The pandemic has shown that employees need a seat at the table when looking at health and safety considerations, and not just on economic issues. MSEA’s local affiliates have gone to the bargaining table across the state with local boards of education throughout the pandemic to negotiate memorandums of understanding. Existing organizational structures proved valuable for communication and negotiations when schools had to change operations overnight at the Governor’s State of Emergency declaration. Employee organization was an asset for the school community, and allowed for instant collaboration.



Giving full and part-time faculty the right to bargain over assignments, notification of employment, office space, office hours is good for students. Stability for teachers and predictability in assignment means that students can count on continuity among their teachers and know when and how to find them when they need help. Something as simple as getting a teacher's name printed in the course catalog, instead of 'TBD' or 'faculty' means they can look for faculty they've had before and have a good working relationship with.

Maryland has long celebrated the freedom of association and the role of organized labor. The strength of organized labor is critical to protecting workers, ensuring quality, and maintaining fairness, safety, and competitive wages in the workplace. Strong employee associations are able to solve problems and represent the needs and concerns of employees and the community to benefit everyone. As other states pass more anti-worker legislation and the Supreme Court's decisions have made it even harder for workers to organize, Maryland should be a leader for working people and pass this bill.

Including the voice of faculty and staff in the improvement of their working conditions ultimately makes it easier to recruit and retain the best possible faculty and staff for our students. This bill will give employees a voice in the decisions that shape their careers and the academic achievement of our students.

**MSEA urges a Favorable Report on Senate Bill 746.**