

THE BALTIMORE TEACHERS UNION



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**Written Testimony from the Baltimore Teachers Union
AFT Local 340**

Submitted by Zach Taylor, BTU Middle School VP

**HB 1322 – Primary and Secondary Education – School Personnel – Prohibition on Retaliation for Not
Returning to In-Person Instruction and Work
Before the House Ways and Means Committee
March 3, 2021**

SUPPORT

Good afternoon Chair Kaiser and members of the House Ways and Means Committee. My name is Zach Taylor, and I am a Middle School VP in the Baltimore Teachers Union, AFT Local 340, the union for educational employees working for the Baltimore City Public School System. On behalf of those workers, we ask for a favorable report for HB 1322.

Let me be clear: educators want to return to in-person instruction, just as soon as it is safe. That has always been our position and main priority, despite what public assertions have been made by our state's elected leadership. What has been especially unfortunate has been a lack of leadership from statewide policy decision makers about how schools can do just that. Additionally, the Governor has openly, publicly threatened educators with retaliatory action in comments made on January 21st to the Baltimore Sun if they do not return to work before it is safe. For educators with underlying health conditions that make catching COVID-19 especially hazardous, or for educators who live with household members who have those conditions, such public comments needlessly threaten their lives.

Statewide policy makers, as well as members of the general public oversimplify the problem, claiming CDC guidelines warrant an immediate reopening of in-person instruction. This is not what CDC recommendations say. Specifically, CDC guidelines explicitly call for the offering of options for remote and telework for educators who have the pre-existing health conditions that make COVID-19 much more deadly. In this way, HB 1322 would enact precisely what the CDC recommends when it comes to offering educators options for teleworking until the virus is less of a threat.¹

Members of the committee, as you all are abundantly aware, there is a shortage of educators in nearly every county in this state. Rather than threaten educators who have time and again demonstrated a commitment to educate Maryland's students, the state could truly partner with educators to come up with a plan on how our schools can return to in-person instruction safely. Passage of HB 1322 would be a step in this direction, and as such, we call for a favorable report. Thank you.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html>