

**Informational Testimony regarding House Bill 1355
Primary and Secondary Education—
Repeating Previous Grade Level—Authorization
(Education Recovery Act of 2021)**

**House Ways and Means Committee
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1:30 pm**

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The Maryland State Education Association offers this informational testimony on House Bill 1355, legislation that would allow students from specific delineated groups to repeat the grade level they were in during the 2020-2021 school year per the request of their parents, guardians, or themselves.

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 it relates to issues pertaining to retention and promotion policies in our schools, MSEA believes that decisions regarding promotion and retention of students should be based upon the judgment of educational teams, consisting of teachers, administrators, other school personnel, and parents. We also believe that educators, administrators, school board members, and parents should actively seek to end social promotion of students or grade-level advancement based primarily on age. A process of alternative instructional programs, as well as credit recovery, should be provided for those students who are not prepared for promotion. Any practice or policy intended to address issues around retention and promotion should be closely



monitored by the school districts in order to ensure that compliance and accountability are maintained.

MSEA further believes that special education students' needs may vary from traditional grade level expectations. School teams may need to consider retention or promotion decisions based on the individualized goals of students and families.

We understand and appreciate the intended goal of this legislation and thank the sponsor for raising this issue, especially in this period when our local school districts across the state are currently transitioning from near total virtual instruction or hybrid instruction to in-person instruction. Over the coming weeks and month, our educators will be carrying out the Herculean task of assessing where our students are—in terms of both academic and nonacademic measures—and conducting the mitigation and remediation strategies necessary to close any gaps that either existed prior to or were exacerbated by school closers for in-person instruction in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is absolutely no doubt about the importance of this step. We strongly believe that ensuring that the needs of our struggling students are met sufficiently and effectively, the voices involved in making these decisions cannot and should not be limited to parents, guardians, and students.