

Testimony in Support with Amendment of House Bill 140
Commission on History, Culture, and Civics in Education

House Ways and Means Committee
January 27, 2021
1:30 pm

Tina N. Dove, M.Ed.
Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association is in support, with an amendment, of House Bill 140. This legislation would establish the Commission on History, Culture, and Civics Education. The Commission would be charged with making recommendations to the State Board of Education, the Governor, and the Maryland General Assembly regarding recommended standard and program changes to the U.S. and Maryland history, civics, and cultural standards that better reflect the diversity of the state and country.

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).

The history of both our state and our country is far more diverse than is generally reflected in the content and courses currently taught in public schools. As such, many members of the United States and Maryland body politic can progress through their formal primary and secondary education and rarely, if ever, see themselves reflected in the content they are learning or hear about themselves in the stories they read and are told. This lack of inclusivity negatively impacts not only the agency our students perceive in their learning, but it also adversely impacts overall student engagement in their learning. This disconnect is further exacerbated by the dearth of a more diverse field of educators in our schools and by the disproportionate (and sometime inaccurate) representations seen in society and in our culture that ultimately reinforces a sense of "otherness" for the people, communities, and cultures who have been rendered less relevant and less valuable.

MSEA unequivocally believes that our diversity makes us stronger. We recognize the importance of ensuring that all of our students see themselves in the lessons they learn and experiences they enjoy



while under our tutelage. There is no doubt that the current history, civics, and cultural standards required by our state could be more reflective of the myriad people and communities that live in our state and in our country. As such, establishing a commission whose charge would be to investigate how best to correct this and to provide suggestions for ways in which our standards can be crafted to better tell all of our stories and accomplishments is tremendously beneficial to current and future learners.

In supporting this legislation, we do suggest one amendment that we believe will help strengthen the bill.

- Page 2, line 22: substitute “One current teacher appointed by the Maryland State Education Association and one current teacher appointed by the Baltimore Teachers Union who” for the words “one member who is a teacher or” so lines 22-23 read as follows:
 - **ONE CURRENT TEACHER APPOINTED BY THE MARYLAND STATE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION AND ONE CURRENT TEACHER APPOINTED BY THE BALTIMORE TEACHERS UNION WHO HOLDS A TEACHING LICENSE IN THE STATE.**

We believe this addition will further strengthen the legislation and will contribute to the success of its overall goal.

We ask the committee to issue a Favorable Report with the above referenced amendment to House Bill 140.