

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 468
Public School Employees – Whistleblower Protections – Civil Actions**

**Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
March 29, 2022**

**Pokuaa Owusu-Acheaw
Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 468, legislation that would clarify the expectations of any school employee who has filed a whistleblower complaint provided for under a law adopted by Maryland in 2017.

MSEA represents 76,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students for the 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).

Whistleblower laws and protections are necessary components for good government. Employees should not feel that they may be jeopardizing their careers in reporting the truth about workplace wrongdoings. Educators should never have to choose between protecting the integrity of the workplace and students versus their own job security; but without whistleblower protections that might very well be the decision they are forced to make out of fear of retaliation. Maryland adopted whistleblower protection for school employees in 2017, however the provision included language that empowers local boards of education to delay consideration and action by requiring employees to "exhaust any administrative remedies before instituting a civil action." This language is overly broad and should be removed from the statute.

In other states with such legal protections, educators have blown the whistle on such things as cheating on standardized tests, rigged procurement schemes, being encouraged to lie on forms regarding class size, fixing grades, and improper



supervision for students with IEP needs. To feel confident that Maryland educators will blow the whistle in similar instances, we must remove or limit this broad administrative power.

For those reasons, MSEA urges a favorable report on House Bill 468.