



Testimony Submitted on Behalf of the Allegany County Education Association

On

Garrett County and Allegany County – Public Schools – Virtual Education Days Pilot Program

Senate Bill 848

Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs

March 2, 2022

The Allegany County Education Association (ACEA) views Senate Bill 848 unfavorably. Though ACEA leadership understands the intent of this bill, it is problematic on multiple levels. It would not be advantageous for educators or students. While the amendments make this bill a pilot program, ACEA still opposes the bill for the reasons outlined below.

Allegany County Education Association is a member driven organization of education employees from a wide variety of career classifications. We are the teachers, instructional assistants, secretaries, and Technicians, that make Allegany County Public Schools function for our students and communities on a day to day basis. ACEA is an affiliate of the Maryland State Education Association and the National Education Association.

ACEA urges an unfavorable report on SB 848. First, as the pandemic has demonstrated, there is no substitute for the in-person expertise of our members. To the greatest extent possible, students must have the benefit of that expertise and the replacement of it with virtual instruction must be reserved for the most serious of circumstances. Periodic inclement weather does not meet that standard. In addition, Allegany County still has areas with limited internet access, as well as the willingness of some to acquiesce to this form of instruction.

Further, ACEA is concerned about the potential impacts of this kind of policy to Education Support Professionals. This kind of policy could have financial ramifications for these members of the school community, which include food and nutrition staff, and bus drivers in addition to those we represent. If a school is closed for a virtual education day, these professionals could lose compensation for that day. These are often the lowest paid employees in the system, and are less likely to make up for a lost day's pay.

Finally, ACEA does not think this bill is necessary. Other systems are doing this, or thinking about doing this without state legislation¹.

ACEA appreciates your consideration of this testimony and urges an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 848.

¹ <https://news.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/quicknotes/mcps-to-consider-virtual-learning-on-bad-weather-days-2/> (Accessed March 2, 2022)