

**Testimony in Support with Amendments to Senate Bill 116
Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts -
Development of Content Standards and Implementation**

**Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Thursday, February 3rd, 2022
1:00 p.m.**

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The Maryland State Education Association supports, with amendments, Senate Bill 116. This legislation would develop content standards for inclusive and diverse English Language Arts to be included in the State Standards and Frameworks and require each county board of education to develop and implement curriculum guides for inclusive and diverse English language arts, including economic diversity, equity, inclusion, tolerance, and belonging.

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).

Students deserve to see themselves represented in curricula, and literature and nonfiction texts are powerful vehicles for learning about oneself, others, and issues around the world, in both the past and present. Diverse and inclusive curricula that examine issues like unconscious bias and economic disparities are important to developing students' critical thinking skills and promoting awareness of experiences different from their own. This bill rightly addresses the importance of developing curricula and resources that highlight diversity in race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, and religious beliefs.

MSEA also believes that, as professionals in their content area, teachers should be highly involved in all steps of the curriculum design, implementation, and decision-



making process. Therefore, we propose removing lines 15-17: “Beginning in the 2023-2024 school year, each public school in the state shall include inclusive and diverse English Language Arts in the English Language Arts curriculum.” Rather, local jurisdictions should utilize the standards provided by the State Board and county boards of education to empower educators with these important instructional resources.

It is critically important that students have access to a rich, diverse, and inclusive literary canon, and that English Language Arts educators have access to high-quality resources to teach it. **We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report, including the above referenced considerations, on Senate Bill 116.**