

Live Near Where You Teach Program / [HB0081]
Official Testimony
Position: **FAVORABLE**

To the Environment and Transportation *Committee*,

My name is Franca Muller Paz, and I'm a Baltimore resident and a teacher in Baltimore City Schools since 2013. I support the Live Near Where You Teach Program (HB0081).

This bill will financially support educators, teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators by granting low-interest mortgages for the purchase of homes near where they are employed. In light of the severe pressures placed on educators who have been on the front lines throughout the COVID crisis, they are exiting the profession in droves with huge spikes in resignations and early retirements. This fall, administrators and school districts have struggled to fill vacancies for weeks or months at a time. And in light of staff shortages, students are being herded into gymnasiums and auditoriums, because there simply are not enough substitute teachers or paraprofessionals in the building who can step into that role. In an interview with WJZ, Cheryl Boast, the leader of the Maryland State Education Association shared that, "We really see a crisis in teacher shortages and other staffing shortages. We have vacancies in classrooms across the state and in some districts, there are hundreds of vacancies."

At my school, Baltimore City College High School, it took us over a month to fill a vacancy for a math teacher. And we are still trying to fill the crucial role of ESOL paraprofessional, a vacancy that opened nearly 5 months ago!

It is crucial that incentives for educators, like this bill, be implemented immediately. We must encourage educators to stay in the classroom in our state and cities, or we will continue to see a mass exodus of teachers, leaving our classrooms overcrowded and students without the important resources and support that educators provide.

Additionally, I believe we should open this opportunity to both educators with teaching certificates and educators that are in roles that do not require them. Both groups of educators are integral to our schools and are experiencing an unprecedented rise in shortages.

I respectfully urge this committee to issue a favorable report on HB0081, the Live Near Where You Teach Program.

Sincerely,

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