

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 890
Education - Collective Bargaining - Certificated Employees - Class Size**

**House Ways & Means
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1:00 PM**

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President**

The Maryland State Education Association stands in strong support of House Bill 890, a bill that would no longer make class size an illegal subject of collective bargaining, but rather an permissive subject.

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).

Currently, Maryland is one of only nine states, Alaska, Indiana, Kansas, Maine, Nebraska, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Wisconsin, where class size is an illegal subject of bargaining. As an illegal subject, educators cannot bring up class size at bargaining tables, even though class sizes have been a top concern for educators and parents, especially as it impacts the individualized attention educators can provide to students. Smaller class sizes allow the opportunity for students and educators to deepen and strengthen relationships—a critical step in supporting academic and social-emotional growth, particularly now in the wake of the stresses, traumas, and inequities stemming from the pandemic and long-term racial and economic injustice. These stronger relationships underpin the life-changing relationships that develop between educators and students that contribute to setting students on a path for academic achievement and overall success.

As we recover from impacts of the pandemic, class size is an even larger issue of concern. Even before the pandemic, educator retention and recruitment were at



crisis levels. With the spiking of workloads and stress levels over the last two years, educator burnout and turnover are escalating, and shortages are impacting every school system in Maryland. A recent MSEA survey found that 61% of Maryland educators said they would be somewhat or much more likely to stay in the profession if class sizes could be lowered. Enrollment in teacher education programs in Maryland—and in surrounding states—has dropped significantly over the last several years, and that trend has accelerated during the pandemic. We need to take steps to reduce the burnout and turnover that are negatively impacting the profession—and driving great educators out of our schools—before the shortage crisis worsens.

In order to better serve our students and to retain educators, we must allow our educators to have a tool that allows them to have a stronger voice for themselves and our students. Removing class size from an illegal subject of bargaining will all educators and district leaders the ability to engage in discussions and discuss and hopefully come to agreement on creative solutions to addressing class size.

MSEA urges a favorable vote on HB 890.