

**Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 938
Education - School Accountability - Parent Empowerment and Choice**

**Ways and Means
Wednesday, March 9th, 2022
1:00 p.m.**

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The Maryland State Education Association opposes House Bill 938, which would authorize parents and legal guardians of students attending public schools that are not meeting State accountability goals to request county boards of education to implement certain intervention strategies, such as a restart model or a school closure model, by gathering signatures on a petition of more than 50% of the parents and legal guardians of students impacted by the school in question, and would require a county board, within 60 days of receipt of a petition, to make a certain determination, in writing, regarding the petition.

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).

Closing a school is a weighty decision that results in complex impacts on students, staff, and families. Research indicates that school closures often do not result in better outcomes for students, and some have noted their potential to perpetuate inequities, as "the burden of school closures falls disproportionately on poor, Black, and Hispanic students."¹ Whether students' scores improve at their next school depends greatly on the performance of the school they transfer to, and improved academic outcomes are far from guaranteed.² Moving schools is disruptive for all

¹ <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/closing-failing-schools-doesnt-help-most-students-study-finds/2017/08>

² Ibid.



involved, even before accounting for the social, emotional, and logistical impacts of changes to relationships with friends and trusted staff members, commute times, and community resources.

Further, accountability measures such as proficiency rates on standardized assessments are one metric among many and are not a linear reflection of the impact of a students' educators or school environment on their performance. Such data can also reflect the resources of the school or community or the needs of the student body, and closing schools on the basis of proficiency data without proper context can create perverse incentives for schools to "demonstrate growth by recruiting higher-achieving students and pushing out low-achieving students."³ Proficiency rates are a valuable resource, but they should not be interpreted in a vacuum or used as the sole catalyst for such consequential interventions.

Families and educators have a shared interest in their students' growth and academic success. Improving outcomes for all students requires communities working together, and this legislation treats school closures and other major interventions with insufficient gravity.

We urge the committee to issue an Unfavorable Report on House Bill 938.

³<https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/closingschools1012.pdf>