

Testimony in Support with Amendments of House Bill 489 Commission on History, Culture, and Civics in Education

**Ways and Means
Thursday, February 10th, 2022
1:00 p.m.**

**Lauren Lamb
Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association is in support, with an amendment, of House Bill 489. This legislation would establish the Commission on History, Culture, and Civics Education. The Commission would be charged with making recommendations to the State Board of Education, the Governor, and the Maryland General Assembly regarding recommended standard and program changes to the U.S. and Maryland history, civics, and cultural standards that better reflect the diversity of the state and country.

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).

The history of both our state and our country is far more diverse than is generally reflected in the content and courses currently taught in public schools. As such, many members of the United States and Maryland body politic can progress through their formal primary and secondary education and rarely, if ever, see themselves reflected in the content they are learning. This lack of inclusivity negatively impacts not only the agency our students perceive in their learning, but it also adversely impacts overall student engagement in their learning. This disconnect is further exacerbated by the dearth of a more diverse field of educators in our schools and by the disproportionate (and sometime inaccurate) representations seen in society and in our culture that ultimately reinforces a sense of "otherness" for

the people, communities, and cultures who have been rendered less relevant and less valuable.

MSEA unequivocally believes that our diversity makes us stronger. We recognize the importance of ensuring that all our students see themselves in the lessons they learn and experiences they enjoy while under our tutelage. There is no doubt that the current history, civics, and cultural standards required by our state could be more reflective of the myriad of people and communities that live in our state and in our country. As such, establishing a commission whose charge would be to investigate how best to correct this and to provide suggestions for ways in which our standards can be crafted to better tell all our stories is tremendously beneficial to current and future learners.

In supporting this legislation, we do suggest one amendment that we believe will help strengthen the bill.

• Page 2, line 16-17: substitute “One current teacher appointed by the Maryland State Education Association and one current teacher appointed by the Baltimore Teachers Union who” for the words “one member who is a teacher or” so lines 16-17 read as follows:

o One current teacher appointed by the Maryland State Education Association and one current teacher appointed by the Baltimore Teachers Union who holds a teaching license in the state.

We believe this addition will further strengthen the legislation and will contribute to the success of its overall goal. **We ask the committee to issue a Favorable Report with the above referenced amendment to House Bill 489.**