

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

**House Ways & Means Committee
March 3, 2022
1:00 PM**

**Frank Soda
Teachers Association of Baltimore County**

Greetings Madame Chair and Honorable Members of the House Ways & Means Committee. My name is Frank Soda and I am a Baltimore County Public Schools Educator. Today, I am providing testimony in support of HB 890, a bill that will provide educators with larger voice on the issue of class size.

I have been an educator in the Baltimore County Public Schools for 15 years. For nine years, I've provided support to the Peer Assistance and Review Program (PAR), which is focused on coaching and mentoring our newest educators who are also the most likely to leave the profession. As teacher shortages continue to increase, alternate certification avenues are becoming more common. More than 50% of the teachers in the PAR Program are conditionally certified with Baltimore County Public Schools. Many have no teaching experience and are required to take graduate level coursework in the evenings, while also learning how to create safe and effective learning environments, content and curriculum, and effective instructional delivery methods. All while providing individualized student supports, grading and reporting, and interacting with families and communities.

Class size matters for every educator and impacts the time available to individualize student instruction, collaborate with parents, and to plan for effective instruction. This is even more true for our newest educators and those who are conditionally certified and have stepped up to fill a void in our public schools. When new educators have large class sizes, tasks like grading and reporting, creating safe and welcoming environments, and individualizing instruction become more difficult, if

not impossible. That does not even factor in the time necessary to meet with coaches and or mentors to reflect on and improve teaching practices, that impact student learning and achievement.

During a time when we face increasing educator shortages, it is imperative that we use every tool available to provide the support necessary to retain our educators and provide the necessary supports to our students.

I kindly ask the committee for a favorable vote on HB 890.