

**Testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 573
School Wellness and Recess Grant Program – Establishment**

**House Ways & Means Committee
February 17, 2022**

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Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 573, as amended by the sponsor, which would establish the School Wellness and Recess Grant Program.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our 896,837 students for 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).

This bill aligns well with MSEA's Resolutions, which have been affirmed by the Representative Assembly many times over the past 15 years.

“MSEA believes that physical fitness is an integral element of a student's education, benefiting physical and mental health, lifelong wellness, and the student's ability to learn. MSEA also believes that daily physical education in all grades, pre-K-12, is a crucial part of a comprehensive curriculum. MSEA further believes that funding authorities should provide adequate financial support to ensure daily physical education in all public schools in Maryland.”

While recess and physical education have always been incredibly important to our students, the need for physical play is even more important as students recover from the traumatic effects of the pandemic. Students have spent much time at home, and not getting the normal socialization, imperative for their development, that they are used to. We must help ensure that they are able to play together in safe environments and use equipment that is safe and well maintained. This bill also allows for these grant funds to be used for adaptive play equipment to make sure all students can participate in play and recess with their friends and fellow students.

MSEA supports and appreciates the sponsor's amendments to clarify that this grant would only be available to nonpublic schools that are providing pre-kindergarten to students as stipulated under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

For those reasons, MSEA urges a favorable report on House Bill 573, as amended.