

**Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 848
Education - Public Charter Schools - Virtual Learning Programs**

**Ways and Means
Thursday, March 3rd, 2022
1:00 p.m.**

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The Maryland State Education Association opposes House Bill 848, which would alter the definition of "public charter school" to include a virtual learning program and require professional staff of a virtual learning program of a public charter school to be subject to certain certification provisions established for professional staff of other public schools.

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).

As the use of online learning has increased throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the need to delineate guardrails for virtual schools and programs is increasingly apparent. This legislation would add virtual programs to existing charter school regulations. However, the definitions in this bill are far too broad and do not adequately define a virtual program in contrast to a virtual school.

This legislation identifies the need to establish requirements for aspects like staff certifications, materials, and access to internet service, but it fails to address numerous other factors relevant to virtual learning, including the use of contractors, caps to student enrollment, and measures to ensure equitable representation of students across race, gender, and other demographics. MSEA supports Senate Bill



362, which more comprehensively addresses the guardrails needed to prepare students and staff in virtual schools for success.

We urge the committee to issue an Unfavorable Report on House Bill 848.