

Education - Collective Bargaining - Certificated Employees - Class Size

SB206

Official Testimony

Position: **FAVORABLE**

To the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Franca Muller Paz, and I'm a Baltimore City resident and a teacher in Baltimore City Public Schools. I support the Education - Collective Bargaining - Certificated Employees - Class Size Act SB85

Our students deserve high quality instruction, with greater academic and emotional support from educators. I have been teaching for over 13 years, and this year, with classes of over 35 students and 6 classes, I can firmly say that large class sizes are tremendously detrimental to the academic and emotional well being of our students.

We are living through a nation-wide crisis of school shootings and violence. Last month in Baltimore alone we suffered multiple shootings and tragic deaths of our young people. In these dark times, we ask ourselves what we can do to protect our kids and make our schools safer?

When I asked a group of students this, they said the answer is simple: build relationships. People who REALLY know each other are much more likely to let each other in, be helped through their dark moments, navigate away from harmful decisions, and talk out issues, instead of choosing physical harm.

When we have class sizes that let us get to know our students, that let our STUDENTS get to know one another, we can do so much to prevent violence.

It is much harder to notice bruises and cuts that shouldn't be there, how a cheerful young man has become sullen and withdrawn, to ask "are you okay" and "how are you" in classrooms rooms packed wall to wall with students. Kids can easily hide signs of abuse and depression, when they are just a face among a sea of their peers.

It is critical for the academic success and safety of our children to have the tools to bargain to reduce class size.

I respectfully urge this committee to issue a favorable report on HB85, the Education - Collective Bargaining - Certificated Employees - Class Size Act

We can continue, as a state, to spend millions of dollars on putting metal detectors in our babies schools, on expanding prison beds, and on repairing the social cost of our suffering. Or - we can make meaningful decisions early in our kids' and teens' lives that can be a balm against a violent future.

In honor of Black history month & Maryland's own, Frederick Douglass, It is easier to build strong children, than to repair broken men.

Sincerely,

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