



Kennedy Krieger Institute

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*A comprehensive resource
for children with disabilities*

March 1, 2023

The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary
Chairwoman, House Ways and Means Committee
Room 131 House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Letter of Support on House Bill 1219 - Maryland Educator Shortage Act of 2023

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary,

Kennedy Krieger Institute applauds the introduction of the Maryland Educator Shortage Act. We appreciate this proactive step to attract talented and diverse individuals into the teaching profession. Maryland has seen staffing shortages in its schools which predate the pandemic. In 2022, as Maryland's schools emerged from the depths of the pandemic, 9.1% of the state's educators had left the profession, and school systems across Maryland reported hundreds of vacancies. Vacancies, which create a challenge during any school year, at the present level compound significantly the challenges for Maryland students, especially those most at risk for sustained learning loss, because of the pandemic-related disruption to their education.

House Bill 1219 would create opportunities for individuals to meet this demand through alternative and traditional channels. Unlike initiatives undertaken in other states, this legislation would not eliminate or reduce the quality in educator preparation programs to place adults in classrooms. Instead, it would provide a framework to empower the State Department of Education and build upon existing programs in higher education, establishing a data-driven mechanism to monitor the success in recruiting, training, and placing qualified and diverse educators in classrooms. Further it would allow credentialed educators from elsewhere to be more easily recruited and retained in Maryland's schools.

Kennedy Krieger is home to four (soon-to-be-five) nonpublic schools, presently serving nearly 500 publicly funded students from across Maryland. Our schools are committed to providing comprehensive, innovative special education and related services for children, adolescents, and young adults with a wide range of learning, social, emotional, behavioral, physical, neurological, and developmental disabilities. Recruiting and retaining educators is essential in our success.

Kennedy Krieger's pandemic-related challenges have been exacerbated by the significant disparity in salary with public school educators, an issue being reviewed under another piece of proposed legislation, House Bill 488, which we commend and fully support. HB 1219 is a broader step supporting the educational success of all of Maryland's students, which is a critical determinate for a lifetime of health and economic well-being.

With the health and success of children at the core of our mission, we deeply appreciate the efforts of the Committee.

Respectfully,

Bradley L. Schlaggar, MD, PhD
President and CEO