



**Hearing Testimony March 1, 2023
House Ways and Means Committee
Service Employees International Union, Local 500, CtW, CLC**

House Bill 1219 – Maryland Educator Shortage Act of 2023

SUPPORT

Good afternoon, my name is Sally Murek and I am proud member and a Vice President of SEIU Local 500 and the Coordinator for the Paraeducator Program at Montgomery County Public Schools. SEIU Local 500 represents over 20,000 working people in Maryland, Washington D.C., and Virginia. Our union represents the support staff at the Montgomery County Public School system, Family Child Care Providers, Faculty and Staff at several Maryland colleges and universities, staff at non-profits and many other working people across the region. By representing childcare workers, public school support staff, and college professors our members are well aware of shortages we are facing among educators in this state.

We thank Governor Moore for his leadership and solution-oriented approach to dealing with the challenges we face in Maryland's education system.

As drafted, this bill seeks to expand and diversify the pool of newly certificated educators in Maryland by expanding eligibility for the Teaching Fellows for Maryland program and creating a new program to pay student teachers for their teacher internships. In addition, it creates a new grant to help local school systems and institutions of higher education develop grow your own programs to help non-certificated educational personnel to become certified. This bill also complies Maryland to the Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact and creates a dashboard to share information about teacher diversity and qualifications. Lastly, and a top priority for SEIU Local 500, it modifies language regarding the definition of a highly qualified early childhood educator.

What defines a highly qualified early childhood educator is key to meeting the goals of universal Pre-K as set before us in the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future*. In order to accomplish this, a Mixed-Delivery Pre-K system, involving both public schools and private childcare providers, will be needed to accommodate the number of students. To attain the goals set by the *Blueprint* for mixed delivery, Maryland must work to remove barriers for private providers to achieve the certifications needed - without needing to sacrifice their businesses. In order to offer a Pre-Kindergarten program, childcare providers must first be certified through the state of Maryland by a county board. Currently, both

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Teacher Preparation Programs and Alternative Teacher Preparation Programs require a teacher residency, which are typically run through local school systems that do not offer Pre-Kindergarten classes-- meaning that these Pre-K teachers are completing practicums in K-12 schools, not qualified Pre-Kindergarten programs. Often times, these aspiring teachers are forced to close the doors of their child care during this residency as they cannot continue their own childcare operations when placed in a local school system. This is simply not an option for the thousands of Family Child Care Providers that would potentially be a part of Pre-Kindergarten expansion.

SEIU Local 500 and its members support alternative pathways for teacher certification for child care providers. We encourage that this alternative pathway contain the following tenants: allowing institutions of Higher Education, nonprofit organizations, or stakeholder organizations, in addition to County Board's, to establish an Alternative Teacher Program with approval by the State Superintendent.

Thank you for your kind consideration and we **strongly urge a favorable report for HB 1219.**

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