



PSSAM
Public School Superintendents' Association
OF MARYLAND

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BILL: HB 888

TITLE: Education - Prekindergarten Alternative Teacher Preparation Program - Authorization and Reporting

DATE: March 1, 2023

POSITION: Support with Amendments

COMMITTEE: House Ways and Means Committee

CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, **supports** House Bill 888 with amendments.

This legislation authorizes alternative teacher preparation programs for pre kindergarten educators and alters staff qualifications to ensure program quality.

Teacher shortage is a significant problem in Maryland, one we share with school districts across the nation. As we know, teacher support and teacher quality directly impact educational achievement for students. Systems and schools plagued by the lack of qualified teachers, teacher turnover, and lack of diversity in the workforce negatively impact student learning. According to a State Board of Education presentation in July of 2022,

“Research indicates that the cost of separation, recruitment, hiring, and training has been estimated to cost between \$9,000 and \$21,000 per teacher. While teacher vacancies continue to increase, *total enrollment in Maryland’s Educator Preparation programs has declined by 33%.*”

This pipeline shortage is critically important and portends that our shortage will continue in the near-term unless we start to broaden our thinking about alternative teacher preparation programs. An important research finding by the University of Maryland is the fact that alternative preparation programs are more diverse than traditional colleges of education. This legislation is well positioned to help bring more alternative preparation programs to the State and diversify our teacher workforce.

Maryland is an “import” state for teachers, with almost 50% of our teachers from out of state. While we have critical needs at all levels, the most significant shortfalls are in special education, mathematics, and early childhood education. The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future creates a prekindergarten program as one of the main tenets of the legislation. However, the current shortage of prekindergarten teachers and pre kindergarten paraprofessionals are impediments that make it difficult to support this priority in the Blueprint.

We support amending this legislation to allow for another option for teacher preparation that recognizes the value and institutional knowledge of teacher assistants in prekindergarten. The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future legislation requires pre-kindergarten teaching assistants to have a Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate or an Associates degree by the 2025/26 school year. To highlight the urgency of alternative certification pathways is the example of Baltimore City where 75% of the City’s paraprofessionals do not meet this qualification; however, more than 70% have at least 10 years’ experience. Therefore we hope the Legislature can support and recognize the importance of these paraprofessionals and through this legislation, modify the Blueprint’s requirements to include alternative approaches for pre-K paraeducators, commensurate with their years of experience.

For these reasons, PSSAM **supports** House Bill 888 with the amendments above and urges a favorable report.