

HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

Testimony by:
Dr. Brad Phillips, Executive Director
January 22, 2024

HB 75 – Higher Education – Teacher Development and Retention Program – Definition

Position: Support

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC), representing Maryland's 16 community colleges, strongly supports HB 75, which would expand the Teacher Development and Retention Fund to include all Maryland's community colleges.

Each year, throughout the State, thousands of teaching jobs go unfilled due to a shortage of teachers. Our community colleges have designated transfer degree pathways such as the Associate of Arts in Teaching (A.A.T.) degree - an articulated transfer pathway into baccalaureate degree programs in teacher education across all Maryland public and private four-year institutions with approved teacher education programs. Through the A.A.T., Maryland's community colleges are vital in assisting the State in meeting its severe shortage of qualified teachers.

Under current law, the State established the Teacher Development and Retention Program as a pilot program in 2023 to incentivize students to pursue a teaching career specifically aimed at teachers employed full-time in high need schools, grade levels or content areas in the State in which there is a shortage of teachers, as identified by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Among the eligibility criteria, Community college students attending colleges that met the initial eligibility (where at least 40% of the attendees receive Federal Pell Grants) in an associate or bachelor's degree program are eligible to receive the initial stipend in the 2024-2025 school year and the 2025-2025 school year. The Maryland Higher Education Commission estimates that at least 2,700 community college students are enrolled in teacher preparation programs each year. However, only two community colleges met this threshold - Garrett College and Wor-Wic Community College. This bill expands eligibility to all other community colleges in the State which will in turn, help the State meet the teacher shortage by providing support for students entering the teaching profession through another point of entry.

This legislation will help in two ways; up to 90% of students who graduate from a community college live and work within the community and second, community colleges provide a more diverse student population. For these reasons, supporting this legislation will help bring more diverse teachers to the classroom and provide teachers who are a reflection of the community in which they too earned their degree. We applaud the expansion of eligibility for Teacher Development and Retention Program educator stipends to include eligible individuals who are initially enrolled in any Maryland community college. Maryland's community colleges serve a local and diverse student and include several minority serving institutions – the exact kind of talent pool this legislation will help the State recruit and support.