

FAVORABLE
House Bill 200
Community Schools – Alterations

House Ways and Means Committee
January 30, 2024

Lauren Lamb
Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 200 as amended by the sponsor, which would authorize each county board of education that has fewer than 40 community schools and that receives funding from the Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program for the personnel grant and the per pupil grant to, under certain circumstances, expend up to 10% of the funds distributed by the State. This bill would also establish other requirements to promote best practices, including developing a common needs assessment as a resource to Community School Coordinators (CSCs), adding to the objectives of a community school, and ensuring student, family, and educator voice is included throughout the support planning process.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

MSEA wholeheartedly supports efforts to align community school policy with proven best practices. When community schools provide targeted supports to students and community members, we see improved academic outcomes, family and community engagement, and attendance, and corresponding reductions in rates of health challenges, student discipline, and chronic absenteeism. Providing the option for county boards with fewer than 40 community schools to access a portion of per pupil and personnel funds increases local flexibility during implementation, and offering a common needs assessment tool to CSCs promotes best practices. As amended by the sponsor, the bill clarifies that this tool is a resource, but CSCs retain the option to tailor the tool to the community they serve. This bill's inclusion of student, family, and educator voice is essential.

We admire the goal of ensuring transparency by requiring that the completed needs assessment is shared online. Simultaneously, we must protect the privacy of students, families, and community members, and we appreciate the sponsor's amendments to place thoughtful limits on the information shared.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 200 as amended by the sponsor.