



BILL: Senate Bill 937
TITLE: Grow Your Own Educators Grant Program – Established
DATE: March 6, 2024
POSITION: Support with Amendment
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment and Judicial Proceedings
CONTACT: Dorie Flynn – Executive Director

The Maryland Association of Nonpublic Special Education Facilities (MANSEF) supports Senate Bill 937 *with an amendment* to include publicly funded special education schools in the establishment of the Grow Your Own Educators Grant Program to support the development of licensed classroom teachers from our existing teaching assistants and paraeducators, who already have experience in the classroom, and have a desire to become fully licensed teachers.

The MANSEF schools are currently serving over 3500 publicly funded special needs students. These students belong to and are counted in the local education agency student counts. Our partnership with the local education agencies (LEAs) to serve special needs students is grounded in the basic tenets of IDEA to have a full continuum of educational options. We all have a shared goal to ensure that students are taught by qualified and passionate individuals. Last year, MSDE provided over \$150 million to LEAs through the Maryland LEADS grant which incorporated a Grow Your Own Program (see fiscal and policy note prepared by DLS.) However, the MANSEF schools were not included nor were they offered such opportunities.

There is no justification to exclude the publicly funded special needs schools as they are highly regulated and monitored by MSDE. Our teachers and staff must be licensed just like our public school counterparts and yet, substitute teachers in public schools are not required to have bachelor's degree as they are in the nonpublic special education schools. The State should be supporting our programs as they have oversight and responsibility for our students. By incorporating language into the bill to include publicly funded nonpublic special education schools, you will validate your commitment to serving our most challenged students and champion the cause to include our most dedicated staff.

This amendment would greatly benefit our 70 member schools, ensuring that we receive the necessary acknowledgement and resources to further enhance the educational experience for our students and support the professional development of our dedicated staff. Our paraprofessionals should have the same opportunities as others to further their career options and become teachers.

Therefore, we respectfully request your consideration to **amend the language of SB937 to include publicly funded nonpublic special education schools** as we serve publicly funded students.