

FAVORABLE
House Bill 478
Motor Vehicles – School Vehicle Drivers – Medical Examinations

House Environment and Transportation Committee
February 15, 2024

Christian Gobel
Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 478. House Bill 478 requires a school bus driver to pass a medical examination both before employment and once during each two years of employment after commencing employment. House Bill 478 aids in solving the bus driver shortage by providing flexibility regarding when a school vehicle driver must undergo a required medical examination in connection with their employment.

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).

Current Maryland regulations require school vehicle drivers to undergo medical examinations prior to their employment and annually to certify their fitness for duty.¹ House Bill 478 preserves the requirement that individuals must undergo a medical examination prior to commencing their employment but allows employers the option to either require a medical examination annually or once every two years for their school vehicle drivers. This change comports with standards established by the U.S. Department of Transportation, which treat DOT physical exams for operators of commercial motor vehicles as valid for up to twenty-four months, subject to certain exceptions.²

¹ Md. Code Regs. 11.19.05.01(A).

² 49 C.F.R. § 391.45(b).



We support efforts by policymakers to address the school bus driver shortage in Maryland, which unfortunately persists. School districts across the nation,³ and in Maryland,⁴ continue to face challenges recruiting and retaining school bus drivers.

MSEA also supports legislation, whether in this bill or a separate bill, that would require employers to shoulder the cost of initial medical examinations for job-applicants seeking to become bus drivers. Initial medical examinations vary in cost and not all prospective employers are willing to pay this cost for their potential employees. Removing this cost barrier would be an additional tool to recruit individuals to become bus drivers.

MSEA will continue to support lawmakers and policies that aim to create a sustainable pipeline for the education workforce. Education support professionals, including school bus drivers, should have job opportunities that provide them with a living wage, decent benefits, a secure retirement, and the ability to join a union.

We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on House Bill 478.

³ Cindy Long, *School Bus Driver Shortage Persists*, National Education Association (Dec. 14, 2023), <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/school-bus-driver-shortage-persists>.

⁴ Paul Gessler, *What Baltimore-area school districts are doing to work around bus driver shortage*, CBS News Baltimore (Aug. 21, 2023), <https://www.cbsnews.com/baltimore/news/baltimore-area-school-districts-draw-up-plans-to-work-around-bus-driver-shortage/>.