



PSSAM
Public School Superintendents' Association
OF MARYLAND

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BILL: HB 116
TITLE: Teacher Degree Apprenticeship
DATE: January 31, 2024
POSITION: Support
COMMITTEE: House Ways and Means Committee
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The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four Maryland local school superintendents, **supports** House Bill 116.

This bill establishes the Teacher Apprenticeship Startup Grant Program administered by the Maryland Department of Labor (MDL) to (1) provide opportunities to begin a career in education in the State to high school students, college students, and career changers; (2) develop a cohort of individuals qualified to work as paraeducators and teachers in the State; and (3) encourage local boards of education to hire apprentices. MDL may award up to \$500,000 to a sponsor for development and launch of a teacher apprenticeship program from State or federal funds. A program sponsor must establish a multi-year registered apprenticeship program that develops a career path, such that level one is a tutor, level two is a paraeducator, and level three is a teacher.

Local superintendents support the General Assembly's assistance and efforts to address the critical shortages of qualified teachers and school personnel. The teacher shortage in Maryland is well-documented and dire. According to the MSDE 2022-2023 First Day of School Vacancy Data Collection, there were 2,572 total vacancies, with the highest number in special education (581); these vacancies vary significantly across LEAs due to local recruitment and retention efforts. Additionally, enrollment in teacher preparation programs has increased since 2017 but is still 2,300 enrollees short of the 2012 levels (Source: Title II Annual Teacher Preparation State Report). More alarmingly, teacher attrition has increased from 9.1% in 2014 to 11.2% in 2023, representing over 7,000 educators who did not return to teaching in the 22/23 school year. Lastly,

the issuance of conditionally certificated teachers has increased by 136% over the last five years (MSDE - Updates on the Maryland Educator Workforce; 9-12-23 before the House Ways and Means Committee).

PSSAM supports a strong apprentice model that will give students a head start on the teacher profession in a supportive academic environment for learning and hands-on teaching. When developed appropriately, apprenticeships offer a sequence of academic and occupational courses, career development, and work experience to prepare students to begin careers and to pursue lifelong learning. “In the classroom” teaching and support helps students integrate academic knowledge and occupational competence to enable students to develop the critical thinking, problem solving, employability, and technical skills required to meet the needs of a teacher in the modern classroom.

Currently, twenty-three local school systems are administering very successful Grow Your Own programs with the potential to yield more than 300 teachers, 100 new paraprofessionals, and support more than 400 conditionally certificate teachers to pass license exams. PSSAM believes HB 116 will aid these existing efforts to strengthen the teacher pipeline and serve as a key resource for recruiting and supporting a more diverse workforce. The Teacher Apprenticeship Program will also help to support and highlight the benefits of teaching in the context of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future that promises increased starting salaries, clear pathways for upward mobility, and leadership growth.

For these reasons, PSSAM **supports** House Bill 116 and requests a favorable report.