

TO: Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment

BILL: Senate Bill (SB) 673 - *Education – Maryland STEM Program – Established*

DATE: March 5, 2025

POSITION: Information

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is providing information for consideration of Senate Bill (SB) 673 - *Education – Maryland STEM Program - Established*, which incentivizes Maryland public school teachers licensed in STEM subjects to teach in nonpublic schools by offering them a grant award. SB 673 requires MSDE to manage the program, including establishing and implementing application procedures, providing submitted applications to the local education agencies, evaluating objections from local education agencies, and awarding grants to local education agencies for dissemination to eligible teachers. Additionally, MSDE is charged with establishing the amount of each grant awarded to a participant, which must be at least equal to the number of hours the teacher teaches STEM classes.

The areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics continue to be critical shortage areas in Maryland. During the 2024-2025 school year, local education agencies reported 76.3 vacancies in STEM areas. An additional 738.6 STEM teachers hold a conditional license, meaning they have not yet completed a teacher preparation program. Additionally, the State teacher and substitute shortage often results in teachers having fewer planning times, something that is collectively bargained. As such, it may be challenging for local education agencies to allow STEM teachers to spend part of their days traveling to and teaching in nonpublic schools during the teacher's regular workday.

SB 673 defines a nonpublic school as "an elementary or secondary school in the state that is not part of the public elementary and secondary education system of the state." In Maryland, nonpublic schools fall into three distinct categories. Two of the categories of nonpublic schools are considered "approved" because they hold a Certificate of Approval issued by the Maryland State Board of Education. The third type, registered church-exempt schools, are exempt from the education regulations set forth by the Maryland State Board of Education because they are governed and operated by a bona fide church organization. Of the three categories of nonpublic schools in Maryland, only publicly funded nonpublic schools approved under Code of Maryland Regulations 13A.09.10 require teachers to hold an educator license. These schools would technically meet the definition of "nonpublic school" in SB 673. The other two types of nonpublic schools are not required to employ licensed teachers. These schools, often referred to as "private pay schools" educate students who are placed by the parents/guardians knowing that the teachers do not require teacher licensure.

Finally, it is worth noting that SB 673 does not provide a comparable incentive for public school teachers teaching in STEM areas.

We respectfully request that you consider this information as you deliberate Senate Bill 673. Please contact Akilah Alleyne, Ph.D. (Executive Director of Government Affairs), akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov, for any additional information.