

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

BILL: Senate Bill 0791– Public Schools – Career Ladder – Teacher Classroom Teaching Time

DATE: February 21, 2025

POSITION: Oppose

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The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) opposes Senate Bill 0791 – *Public Schools – Career Ladder – Teacher Classroom Teaching Time*, which alters existing statute governing the Career Ladder for Educators to increase the time spent teaching in the classroom from an average of 60% to an average of 80%. This, in turn, will decrease the time teachers are required to be engaged in other teaching activities, including improving instruction, working with students who need additional help, and leading/participating in professional learning, to 20% of teachers' working time.

MSDE opposes SB0791, because it is inconsistent with the foundational Blueprint concept that increasing the amount of time teachers must collaborate with their peers and work with students who need additional instruction will improve student outcomes and decrease attrition by improving teacher working conditions.

In addition to independent planning time, teachers benefit from opportunities to collaborate with their colleagues. Research demonstrates that teachers working in more supportive professional environments improve their effectiveness more over time than teachers working in less supportive contexts.<sup>1</sup> A study in 2015 concluded that teachers and schools that engage in better-quality collaboration have better achievement gains in math and reading.<sup>2</sup> A research review in 2017 found that schools that are more collaborative have been shown to have stronger student academic outcomes than schools that are less collaborative.<sup>3</sup>

Providing time for teachers to work collaboratively to review curricula, plan instruction, identify where students are struggling, and adjust accordingly, is critical. Teachers consistently identify increased planning and collaboration time as one of the top ways to increase teacher retention and job satisfaction. The Educators for Excellence Voices from the Classroom 2022 Survey of America's Educators revealed that 82% of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) respondents identified professional support and leadership opportunities as being the most likely to keep teachers in the profession.<sup>4</sup> Teachers of color surveyed in the 2022 State of the American Teacher Survey indicated that

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<sup>1</sup> Kraft, M., & Papay, J. (2014). Can Professional Environments in Schools Promote Teacher Development? Explaining Heterogeneity in Returns to Teaching Experience. *Educational Effectiveness and Policy Analysis*. 36(4). 476-500; Ronfeldt, R.; Owen Farmer, S., McQueen, K., & Grissom, J. (2015). Teacher collaboration in instructional teams and student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 52(3), 475–514; Pil, F. K., & Leana, C. (2009). Applying organizational research to public school reform: The effects of teacher human and social capital on student performance. *Academy of Management Journal* (52), 1101-1124.

<sup>2</sup> Ronfeldt, M., Farmer, S., McQueen, K., & Grissom, J. (2015). Teacher collaboration in instructional teams and student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 52(3), 475-514.

<sup>3</sup> Schleifer, D., Rinehart, C., & Yanisch, T. (2017). Teacher Collaboration In Perspective: A Guide to Research. Public Agenda. Available at <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED591332.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Educators for Excellence, Education Trust. (2022). *Voices from the classroom: Deep dive BIPOC teachers*.

working with other staff of color and nurturing positive collegial relationships could boost retention.<sup>5</sup> In a 2016 survey conducted by the Center on Education Policy, 34% of teachers identified more time to collaborate with other teachers in the school as an action that would significantly help to improve their day-to-day work.<sup>6</sup>

The significant and permanent reduction in time for teachers to be engaged in other teaching activities proposed by SB0791 could have a detrimental impact on teacher retention. Some of the greatest challenges faced by teachers, according to the Listen to Us: Teachers' Views and Voices survey, come from external policies and constantly changing demands.<sup>7</sup> One-third of the teachers surveyed cited constantly changing demands placed on teachers and students as being a major challenge. SB0791 significantly alters an existing policy that Maryland teachers have been planning for since 2021.

MSDE is dedicated to building a diverse, high-quality teacher workforce and accelerating positive student outcomes. Altering the intent of the Career Ladder for Educators by decreasing the time teachers will ultimately spend improving instruction, working with students who need additional help, and participating in professional learning may negatively impact teachers and students.

We respectfully request that you consider this information as you deliberate on SB0791. Please contact Akilah Alleyne, Ph.D. (Executive Director of Government Affairs), [akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov](mailto:akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov), for any additional information.

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<sup>5</sup> Steiner, E., Greer, L., Berdie, L., Schwartz, H., Woo, A., Doan, S., Lawrence, R., Wolfe, R., & Gittens, A. (2022). [Prioritizing strategies to racially diversify the K-12 teacher workforce: Findings from the state of the American teacher and state of the American principal surveys](#). RAND Corporation.

<sup>6</sup> Rentner, D.S., Kober, N., & Frizzell, M. (2016). *Listen to us: Teachers' views and voices*. Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy.

<sup>7</sup> Rentner, D.S., Kober, N., & Frizzell, M. (2016). *Listen to us: Teachers' views and voices*. Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy.