

FAVORABLE
House Bill 875
Commission on History, Culture, and Civics in Education

House Ways and Means Committee
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The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 875, which would establish the Commission on History, Culture, and Civics in Education to make recommendations to the State Board of Education and the State Department of Education to further the discovery, interpretation, and learning of the history, culture, and civics of the United States and Maryland. It would also require the Commission to report its recommendations and findings to the State Board, the Governor, and the General Assembly each year.

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).

All students deserve to see themselves fully represented as part of an accurate, complete history and civics education. Yet too many students of the United States and Maryland can progress through their formal primary and secondary education and rarely, if ever, see themselves reflected in the content they are learning. We know the history of both our state and our country is far more diverse than is reflected in the content currently taught in public schools, and we therefore enthusiastically support the Commission that this bill would create and its goal of recommending standards to the State Board that accurately reflect the history, culture, and civics of the United States and Maryland.

In revising social studies frameworks, it is critical to ensure that updated information is incorporated through the revision of standards rather than expanding the quantity of instruction required. Educators have finite instructional time in the school year, and it is essential that in improving the accuracy and completeness of instructional content, we do not reduce the overall time available for each standard. We are therefore especially supportive of the approach proposed in this legislation: by evaluating curriculum standards holistically, with the input of educators, and with consideration of a range of underrepresented communities, the Commission can develop comprehensive recommendations that allow the State Board to best revise standards. We are confident that this process will result in standards that are more up-to-date, rigorous, and reflective of the experiences, contributions, and history of communities as diverse as Maryland's student population.

MSEA unequivocally believes that our diversity makes us stronger. We are working toward a future where all students see themselves represented at school, and we believe this Commission is a meaningful step to that end.

We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on House Bill 875.