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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing today to express my FAVORABLE support for HB 888 (Education – Initial Certification – Qualifications) as introduced by Delegates Fair, Ebersole, and Kerr. Please allow me to explain my position.

As chair of the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board, I have been keenly interested in the current requirement that teacher candidates in higher education teacher preparation programs must complete a nationally recognized Portfolio Based Assessment of their teaching skills. Previous legislation waived this requirement if teacher candidates were enrolled in a teacher induction program in their local LEA (local education agency).

This inconsistency has unfortunately produced an uneven level of assessment for our teacher candidates obtaining their teaching degrees from traditional programs that can be costly, redundant and discouraging of students entering the teaching profession.

HB 888 addresses these inconsistencies by allowing teacher candidates who have already been part of a portfolio based assessment system at both the college and school system induction level to be spared the redundancy of completing an expensive product based assessment of skills that have already been mastered. In the event a college or university would like to continue the assessments it would be free to do so.

It should also be noted that many states have already done away with these assessments for the reasons stated above, and the often-cited research that points to potential bias in the assessments against minority teachers – a group most often underrepresented in the teaching profession.

Although I am not writing on behalf of the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board, I can attest to the concerns expressed by several current and previous board members on this issues. I believe that HB 888 will positively impact our ability to maintain high levels of rigor for our teacher candidates as well as remove unnecessary regulatory barriers for our promising new teachers who are taking their first steps at entering the teaching profession.

Sincerely,

Darren Hornbeck  
Teacher, Linganore High School – Frederick MD.  
Chair, Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board