

Thank you, Chair Senator Brian Feldman, Vice Chair Senator Cheryl Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee, for the opportunity to testify today. I appreciate the chance to share my experience with the NJ STEM program and highlight the positive impact this initiative has had on both educators and students.

The STEM program has been instrumental in my professional growth and financial stability. As an educator, this program has provided me with the support and resources necessary to continue teaching STEM subjects with passion and effectiveness. The additional compensation offered by the program has alleviated financial burdens, reducing the need to seek supplemental income outside of teaching. This has allowed me to fully dedicate myself to my students and focus on delivering high-quality STEM education. Beyond financial benefits, the program has played a critical role in my professional development. Teaching in a STEM-focused setting has enhanced my instructional methods and broadened my professional network, allowing me to collaborate with other dedicated educators. Additionally, I have witnessed firsthand how this program has addressed the ongoing STEM teacher shortage by encouraging more educators to obtain certification in these fields.

The impact on students has been equally profound. Through this program, I have seen significant improvements in student engagement, interest, and achievements in STEM subjects. By preparing students for careers in high-demand STEM industries, the program is helping to bridge workforce gaps and ensure that Maryland remains competitive in these fields. Furthermore, it fosters collaboration between public and nonpublic schools, creating opportunities for shared resources and expertise that benefit both educators and students.

In conclusion, I urge the committee to vote favorably on SB673 for the benefit of teachers, students, and the future of STEM education in Maryland. This program has already demonstrated success in New Jersey, and expanding its reach will ensure that more educators and students can experience its positive impact. Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Caniece Williams