

Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 1115. My name is Sheila Norris, and I am a veteran teacher who has dedicated many years to highly effective classroom instruction and ongoing professional growth through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification process.

Senate Bill 957 addresses an unintended consequence of the original Maryland Blueprint legislation. While the Blueprint has created many positive opportunities for students and educators across the state, it has also left a small group of veteran teachers—like myself—without recognition for the extensive work we have done to meet the rigorous standards of National Board Certification.

The teachers affected by this issue are not a large group. Because of that, the fiscal impact of correcting this oversight is limited and predictable. At the same time, the impact on the educators involved is significant. Many of us have spent years pursuing National Board Certification, a process that requires deep reflection, documented evidence of effective teaching, and a sustained commitment to improving student learning.

Veteran teachers who have completed this process often serve as leaders within their schools. We mentor colleagues, support early-career teachers, and help guide others through the National Board process. In many ways, we help build the professional culture that the Blueprint itself seeks to promote.

However, due to the way the current law was implemented, some of these experienced educators are not receiving the recognition that aligns with their accomplishments and contributions. Senate Bill 957 offers a targeted and reasonable solution to this problem.

This legislation does not create a large new expense for the state. Instead, it corrects a narrow gap in policy that affects a small number of highly accomplished teachers who have already demonstrated their commitment to excellence in Maryland's classrooms.

Supporting Senate Bill 957 sends an important message: that Maryland values experienced, highly effective educators and the professional standards that strengthen our schools. It ensures that the goals of the Blueprint—to elevate the teaching profession and support teacher leadership—are applied fairly to those who have already invested so much in that mission.

Thank you for your time and for your consideration of this important bill.

Respectfully,
Sheila Norris, NBCT