

**FAVORABLE Testimony in Support of House Bill 168
Housing and Community Development - Affordable Housing - Educator
Workforce Housing and Municipal Corporations**

**Education, Energy, and the Environment
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1:00 pm**

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The Maryland State Education Association (MSEA) **strongly supports House Bill 168**, which expands access to affordable housing for educators and school employees across Maryland.

House Bill 168 builds on existing State housing tools by expanding the use of established programs—including the Housing Innovation Fund, Housing Innovation Pilot Program, and Neighborhood and Community Assistance Program—to support the development of educator workforce housing. Importantly, the bill does not require new State spending and can be implemented using existing resources, while opening these programs to local school systems and municipal corporations as eligible partners.

The bill defines educator workforce housing as affordable housing reserved for teachers and other school system employees and explicitly incorporates this housing type into State housing policy. By doing so, it ensures that educator housing is treated as a priority within Maryland's broader efforts to address housing supply and affordability challenges.

House Bill 168 also recognizes educator housing as a legitimate **school purpose**, allowing local school boards to retain and utilize land or facilities for workforce housing rather than declaring them surplus. This provision creates



new opportunities to repurpose existing public assets to address workforce needs in high-cost areas.

In addition, the bill strengthens coordination and flexibility across housing programs:

- It prioritizes projects that include educator workforce housing within the Housing Innovation Fund and Pilot Program
- It expands eligibility so local school boards and municipal corporations can directly participate in housing development efforts
- It allows educator workforce housing projects to move forward while ensuring school systems are notified and engaged in the process

These changes remove structural barriers and enable more innovative, locally driven solutions to housing shortages affecting educators.

MSEA's support is grounded in **MSEA Resolution F.23 – Fair Housing**, which affirms that “fair housing practices should be broadened and strengthened to assure each citizen an equal opportunity to reside in a neighborhood of their choice.” Ensuring educators can afford to live in the communities where they work is essential to that vision.

MSEA represents 76,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools and community colleges, teaching and supporting our almost 900,000 K-12 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA represents more than 44 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA). Across the state, rising housing costs are forcing many educators into long commutes or out of the profession entirely. These



challenges directly impact recruitment, retention, and the stability of our school communities.

By leveraging existing housing programs, encouraging partnerships, and unlocking public assets, House Bill 168 provides a practical pathway to increase the supply of affordable housing for educators—without imposing new fiscal burdens on the State.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to issue a **Favorable Report** on House Bill 168.