



Testimony - HB 168, Housing and Community Development - Affordable Housing -
Educator Workforce Housing and Municipal Corporations
Favorable
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 31, 2026
Terrence Cavanagh on Behalf of SEIU Local 500

Honorable Chairman Feldman and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

On behalf of the more than 20,000 education workers represented by SEIU Local 500—including educational support professionals in Montgomery County Public Schools—we stand in strong support of House Bill 168.

Our members are the backbone of Maryland’s public education system. Yet far too many of them—alongside teachers—are being priced out of the very communities they serve. The rising cost of housing is not just a personal burden; it is a workforce crisis that directly impacts student success, school stability, and the ability of districts to recruit and retain qualified staff.

HB 168 is a smart, targeted solution to this growing crisis.

This legislation recognizes educator workforce housing as an eligible use of state housing resources and explicitly includes school employees as a priority population for affordable housing development. By doing so, the bill takes an important step toward aligning Maryland’s housing policy with the real needs of its public workforce.

For SEIU Local 500 members, this matters deeply:

- Many of our members earn modest wages despite performing essential roles in schools. They are increasingly forced into long commutes, unstable housing situations, or leaving the profession entirely.

- Chronic vacancies among support staff—especially bus drivers, paras, and building services workers—are exacerbated by the lack of affordable housing near schools.
- Students suffer when experienced, trusted adults are pushed out of their communities.

HB 168 helps address these challenges in several important ways:

- It allows state housing programs and funding streams to support educator workforce housing, including developments that serve school employees directly.
- It enables local school systems and boards of education to partner in housing development, including the use of surplus land for affordable housing.
- It ensures that educators and school employees are recognized as a priority group in affordable housing initiatives, including eligibility under federal housing programs like the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit.

Importantly, this bill does not create a one-size-fits-all mandate. Instead, it provides tools and flexibility for local jurisdictions to innovate—leveraging partnerships, public land, and existing funding programs to meet workforce housing needs.

For our members, this is about more than housing—it's about dignity, stability, and the ability to continue serving students without sacrificing their own well-being.

When school employees can afford to live in the communities where they work:

- Schools are more stable
- Students benefit from stronger relationships
- Local economies are strengthened

SEIU Local 500 urges a favorable report on HB 168 and thanks the Committee for its commitment to addressing both the housing crisis and the needs of Maryland's public education workforce.

Thank you for your time and consideration.