

Testimony - SB 648 - Local School Systems - Educat

Uploaded by: Dawana Sterrette

Position: FAV

**Testimony of the
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners
In Support of Senate Bill 648
Local School Systems – Educator Screening – Educator Identification Clearinghouse
(School Personnel Vetting and Hiring Transparency Act)**

March 4, 2026

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners supports the legislation which requires MSDE to register each Maryland LEA and pay any applicable fees and dues associated with membership. With respect to the bill's subsequent provisions for LEAs, The school board believes the Baltimore City Public School System is already well poised to meet the bill's requirements.

As of last spring, the school board requires all applicants for certificated positions create a TEACH profile (MSDE's licensure management system) in order to have a complete application that can be screened and then would be viewable by hiring managers. Once a candidate has a TEACH profile, it allows MSDE to check candidates for flags in the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC).

Once an offer is made, the school board requires a complete licensure application to be submitted in TEACH in order to clear a new hire to start (among other clearance requirements). The school board no longer allows certificated staff to start without having a complete licensure application.

For the foregoing reasons, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners supports Senate Bill 648 and urges a favorable report.

Dawana Merritt Sterrette, Esq.
Executive Director, Legislative and Government Affairs
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners
443-250-0190

Written Testimony for SB0648 Maryland - Clearingho

Uploaded by: Jimmy Adams

Position: FAV



Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I write in support of Maryland SB0648 and its inclusion of the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) Educator Identification Clearinghouse as part of Maryland's educator screening process.

The NASDTEC Educator Identification Clearinghouse has served state licensing agencies since 1985. Its purpose is straightforward and prudent: to allow jurisdictions to see whether an individual has had an administrative action taken against his or her educator's license prior to the issuance of a license in another state. It is not a criminal database. It contains administrative actions—disciplinary measures taken under a state's educator licensure statutes and regulations. These actions vary by state. One state may only have the authority to revoke a license, while another may admonish, suspend, or revoke. Importantly, most educator misconduct cases are addressed through administrative hearings—not criminal court. If an educator is not arrested or fingerprinted, there will be no record in a state or federal criminal background check. Even when misconduct is based on a criminal conviction, a criminal background report will not explain what action was taken against the educator's license. The Clearinghouse fills that critical gap.

The Clearinghouse functions as an early-warning system. It allows a state educator licensing agencies, school district, or educator preparation provider to quickly check whether an adverse action has occurred and then contact the reporting jurisdiction for more details. It is not designed to be the sole basis for licensure issuance, employment or admission decision. Rather, it alerts decision-makers that further inquiry is warranted. By including the Clearinghouse in its background screening process, a school district can make better, more informed hiring decisions and reinforce its risk management plan. Access is practical and affordable. All 50 states, the Department of Defense Education Activity, Ontario, British Columbia, and Guam contribute data. Local education agencies and educator preparation providers may access the system by joining NASDTEC as an associate member and paying a modest subscription fee.

Each year, approximately 6,100 educators nationwide have adverse actions taken against their licenses. When considering there are roughly 3.5 million public school educators, plus those in private, parochial, and charter schools in the United States, the vast majority are dedicated professionals who do what is good and beneficial for students each day—much like the countless drivers who follow the rules of the road, the doctors we trust with our health, and the bankers we trust with our finances.

But the small percentage matters. It is not uncommon for an educator who has had adverse action taken in one state to seek employment, certified, classified, or even volunteer, in another state, or to apply for admission to another educator preparation program. Without access to administrative action information, hiring entities may unknowingly place students at risk. We also recognize the realities: some incidents go unreported; some cases are dropped because victims are unwilling to testify or evidence is insufficient; and some accused individuals are ultimately exonerated. The Clearinghouse does not prejudge. It simply promotes transparency and due diligence during the hiring process.

Maryland SB0648 strengthens student protection while respecting due process. It does not assume guilt. It does not replace criminal background checks. It complements them. By incorporating the NASDTEC Educator Identification Clearinghouse into Maryland's screening framework, this legislation provides school systems with a more complete picture before making decisions that affect children.

The vast majority of educators honor their calling with integrity. This bill supports them by upholding the profession's standards and reinforcing public trust. For the safety of Maryland's students and the integrity of the educator workforce, I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB0648.

Respectfully submitted,



James W. Adams
Executive Director
NASDTEC





NASW Maryland - 2026 SB 648 FAV - School Personnel

Uploaded by: Karessa Proctor

Position: FAV



**Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 4, 2026**

**Senate Bill 648: Local School Systems - Educator Screening – Educator
Identification Clearinghouse
(School Personnel Vetting and Hiring Transparency Act)**

****Support****

The National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter (NASW-MD) strongly supports Senate Bill 648: The School Personnel Vetting and Hiring Transparency Act. It is imperative that all schools are staffed by educational professionals who meet the highest moral and ethical standards, and who do not have a history of behavior in educational settings that poses a risk to the safety of our students.

The Social Workers in Schools Committee (SWIS) at NASW-MD is comprised of front-line social workers as well as their leaders from school systems throughout Maryland, all of whom were screened through a criminal background check as well as through additional screening at the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) prior to being granted a Maryland license as an educational professional. MSDE maintains an independent database of those whose Maryland educational licenses have been revoked due to prior bad acts. These incidents do not show up on a criminal background check, because their hearings and the resultant findings occur in front of an administrative law judge, not in a criminal court.

The current problem is with those whose educational license or certificate was removed in other states after being adjudicated to represent a serious threat to the safety of students, but were not charged criminally, and then who moved to Maryland to work in our schools. Given the current shortage of educators, our local school systems cast an increasingly wide net to identify qualified educators and support personnel to serve our students, and the threat of hiring a deeply compromised individual is rising. At present, there is no mechanism in Maryland to identify and disqualify individuals with such a history. This legislation would provide such a mechanism. The National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) hosts an excellent introductory [video](#) about their Ed ID Clearinghouse, where such individuals can be screened out.

(over)

As School Social Workers, our commitment to the safety of our students is non-negotiable. As such, we strongly urge that the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee take action to close this loophole by returning a favorable report on this legislation.

Respectfully,

Gail L. Martin, MSW

School Social Worker (retired)

NASW-MD Chapter; Social Work in Schools Committee Legislative Liaison

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Uploaded by: Leslie Margolis

Position: FAV

EDUCATION ADVOCACY COALITION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Senate Bill 648 – Local School Systems – Educator Screening – Educator Identification Clearinghouse

March 4, 2026

Position: Support

The Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities (EAC) is a coalition of nearly 50 organizations and individuals concerned with education policy for students with disabilities in Maryland. The EAC supports Senate Bill 648 because it requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to register each local school system as an associate member of a national membership organization that provides access to the Educator Identification Clearinghouse. This bill aims to protect all children served by the Maryland professional education community by ensuring all Maryland educators are safe to be in the classroom.

The Education Identification Clearinghouse is a secure, searchable national database that provides an immediate alert regarding individuals who have had their professional educator license or certificate annulled, denied, suspended, revoked, or otherwise invalidated. It is a national collection point for professional educator discipline actions taken by the fifty states, the District of Columbia, U.S. Department of Defense Educational Opportunity schools, and Guam.

Educator positions requiring a license in Maryland include all K-12 public school teachers, specialists (school counselors, school psychologists, reading specialists, library media specialists, reading teachers, and pupil personnel workers), and administrators (superintendents, principals, assistant principals, and supervisors) in public schools, special education nonpublic schools, and state institutions.

Although the safety of all students is paramount, SB648 is particularly important to protect students with disabilities who are especially vulnerable to abuse and neglect in school. It has been virtually impossible to ensure that a staff member who has faced discipline in one state is not able to be hired in another state. Some years ago, a teacher in Texas lost her teaching license and then moved to another state where, after obtaining a new teaching position, she was responsible for the death of a student with disabilities in her classroom. HB856 will help to prevent that kind of tragedy in Maryland.

For these reasons, the EAC supports Senate Bill 648.

Contact: Leslie Seid Margolis at lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org or 443-692-2505.

Respectfully submitted,

Rene Averitt-Sanzone, Parents Place of Maryland
Linda Barton, Education Consultant
Beth Benevides, Autism Society of Maryland; co-chair, Education Advocacy Coalition
Ellen Callegary, Attorney (retired)
Melanie Carlos, Partnership for Extraordinary Minds
Stephanie Carr, SL Carr Education Consultants
Rich Ceruolo, Parent & Advocate
Jennifer Engel Fisher, JEF Consultants
Beth Ann Hancock, Charting the Course
Rosemary Kitzinger, Bright Futures
Ande Kolp, The Arc Maryland
Rachel London, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council
Leslie Seid Margolis, Disability Rights Maryland
Monica Martinez, Martinez Advocacy
Ellen O'Neill, Atlantic Seaboard Dyslexia Education Center
Ronza Othman, National Federation of the Blind of Maryland
Rebecca Rienzi, Pathfinders for Autism
Ronneta Stanley, Loud Voices Together Education Advocacy Group
Wayne Steedman, The Steedman Law Group

Sponsor Testimony

Uploaded by: Senator Hettleman Senator Hettleman

Position: FAV

SHELLY HETTLEMAN
Legislative District 11
Baltimore County

Chair, Rules Committee
Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Capital Budget
Health and Human Services
Chair, Pensions

Joint Committees

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TESTIMONY OF SENATOR SHELLY HETTLEMAN
SB 648 - Local School Systems - Educator Screening - Educator
Identification Clearinghouse (School Personnel Vetting and Hiring
Transparency Act)

The School Personnel Vetting and Hiring Transparency Act advances student safety in Maryland by strengthening transparency and accountability in educator hiring practices. The bill requires every local education agency (LEA) to use the NASDTEC Educator Identification Clearinghouse as part of the process for hiring and reviewing educators. Recent events at Pikesville High School exposed shortcomings in the current system, where a former athletic director, who was later charged with multiple serious offenses, was able to secure employment without sufficient screening. This situation revealed critical gaps in Maryland's vetting procedures and demonstrated how failures in oversight can place students in harm's way.

Educators and school staff hold positions of immense trust, shaping not only academic outcomes but also the emotional and physical safety of students. Yet weaknesses in existing screening practices have allowed individuals with documented misconduct to move between school districts without detection. Addressing these vulnerabilities is essential to ensuring that those working in Maryland schools meet the highest professional and ethical standards.

SBO648 addresses this problem by establishing a consistent, statewide approach to educator screening. Under the bill, all LEAs must become associate members of the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification

(NASDTEC) and are required to screen prospective hires through its Educator Identification Clearinghouse. This national system enables states and school districts to access critical information like license revocations, disciplinary actions, and ethical violations that may not appear in traditional background checks.

The Clearinghouse does not replace existing hiring procedures or impose additional burdens on school systems. Instead, it serves as an early warning mechanism, flagging concerns that warrant closer review. By ensuring that decision-makers have access to comprehensive and current information, SB0648 supports sound hiring practices and helps safeguard students and school staff. Ultimately, this legislation is about creating uniform standards that prioritize student well-being and reinforce the integrity of Maryland's education system. Families deserve confidence that those entrusted with educating their children have been thoroughly screened, and administrators deserve reliable tools to prevent individuals with a history of misconduct from slipping through the system. SB0648 strengthens protections for students by adding an essential layer of accountability to the educator hiring process statewide. I respectfully urge the Committee to give SB0648 a favorable report.



SB0648/843325/1

AMENDMENTS
PREPARED
BY THE
DEPT. OF LEGISLATIVE
SERVICES

24 FEB 26
11:38:28

BY: Senator Hettleman
(To be offered in the Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee)

AMENDMENT TO SENATE BILL 648
(First Reading File Bill)

On page 2, in line 13, strike "**OCTOBER**" and substitute "**AUGUST**"; and in lines 20 and 21, strike "**BEFORE ANY INTERACTION WITH CHILDREN**".

SB 646 - LEA - Educator Identification Clearinghou

Uploaded by: Mary Pat Fannon

Position: FWA



Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director
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BILL: SB 646

TITLE: Local Education Agencies - Educator Screening - Educator Identification ClearingSenate (School Personnel Vetting and Hiring Transparency Act)

DATE: March 4, 2026

POSITION: Favorable with Amendments

COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four local school superintendents, **supports** Senate Bill 646 **with amendments**.

This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to register each local school system (LSS) in the State as an associate member of a national membership organization that provides access to the Educator Identification ClearingSenate and to pay any applicable fees and dues associated with the membership. Each LSS must use the clearinghouse to screen individuals who receive an offer of employment for an educator position that requires a license. In addition, each local school system must ensure that each individual who receives such an offer (1) applies for the appropriate license after the offer of employment and before the start of employment and (2) obtains the appropriate license before any interaction with children. Nothing in the bill may be construed to impair or affect existing statutory prohibitions against hiring or retaining individuals convicted of specified crimes, including child sexual abuse.

Maryland school systems take their responsibility to ensure the safety of students and staff extremely seriously. We appreciate the bill's emphasis on strengthening student safety and reinforcing the integrity of the licensure process. In particular, we support the provision requiring candidates to apply for licensure at the time they receive an offer of employment. This requirement adds an important layer of screening and reinforces the shared commitment of school systems and the State to student protection.

A review of Maryland's 24 local school systems confirms that extensive safeguards are already in place, including existing federal and state mandates, such as:

- State and FBI fingerprinting (criminal background checks and the Adam Walsh Background Clearance Request form, DHR/SSA 1279A)
- Form I-9 verification (paper and E-Verify where available)
- Md. Code, Educ. § 6-113.2 Child Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct review (“HB 486 review”)
- Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) TEACH database review
- Maryland CJIS database (fingerprinting and background checks)
- The FBI's Next Generation Identification (NGI) *Rap Back Service*
- MSDE Disqualified Substitute List review
- Department of Social Services child abuse registry checks
- Maryland Judiciary Case Search inquiries, where applicable
- Internal database reviews
- Drug testing, where required
- Recruiting and tracking systems such as Workday, AppliTrack (Unified Talent/PowerSchool), TalentEd (PowerSchool), and Frontline
- Basic online screening and employment verification processes

These layers of review reflect a strong and proactive screening infrastructure across the State.

While we support the bill's intent, *we respectfully request a clarifying amendment to remove the language requiring a license to be fully issued before “any interaction with students.”*

Although well-intentioned, this provision could unintentionally create barriers for pre-screened, qualified educators whose paperwork is still being processed. In practice, licensure issuance can be delayed for reasons outside of a candidate's control even when all safety screenings have been successfully completed. Removing this final clause, while retaining the requirement that candidates apply for licensure upon offer of employment, preserves the bill's important safety objectives while allowing reasonable operational flexibility during the hiring and licensure process.

Finally, we support an amendment to move the date from October 1, 2026 to August 1, 2026 by which local school systems must utilize the clearinghouse to screen individuals offered employment.

Senate Bill 646 builds upon current protections aimed at ensuring only qualified and appropriate individuals enter our classrooms. We strongly support the bill's focus on student safety and maintaining the credibility of the licensure system.

Therefore, PSSAM **supports** Senate Bill 646 with the **amendments** outlined above.

SB0648 - State Board & MSDE - SWA.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Richard Kinkaid

Position: FWA

TO: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

BILL: Senate Bill (SB) 648 - Local School Systems - Educator Screening - Educator Identification Clearinghouse (School Personnel Vetting and Hiring Transparency Act)

DATE: March 4, 2026

POSITION: Support with Amendments

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) extend their support for Senate Bill (SB) 648 - Local School Systems - Educator Screening - Educator Identification Clearinghouse (School Personnel Vetting and Hiring Transparency Act) with amendments. MSDE and the State Board value the bill's intent to reinforce the integrity of the licensure process and to enhance student safety by requiring local education agencies (LEAs) to utilize the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) Educator Identification Clearinghouse.

The NASDTEC Educator Identification Clearinghouse, a national database, is a vital and cost-effective tool for identifying applicants who have faced disciplinary actions in other states. This tool, together with Maryland's licensure application process, provides a cost-effective, pre-screening system that helps ensure qualified educators are placed in classrooms. SB 648 is expected to have a minimal fiscal impact on the State. With 64,191 teachers currently working in Maryland public schools, NASDTEC charges a modest subscription fee based on each LEA's total full-time equivalency (FTE) of teachers, along with a \$500 annual membership fee per LEA. Even for the largest districts, these fees represent a reasonable investment in student safety and are well within the capacity of LEAs to implement.

While the State Board and MSDE fully support the goal of preventing individuals with revoked or suspended licenses from entering Maryland classrooms, the current language requiring a license to be fully issued before "any interaction with students" could create logistical challenges that may place additional strain on the existing teacher workforce. In light of this, the State Board and the Department request a clarifying amendment to provide provisional flexibility for educators who have passed criminal background checks and initial screenings but are awaiting administrative paperwork. Current transcripts for May graduates are often not finalized until late July or August. Strictly prohibiting interaction with students until the final license is issued would prevent new hires from:

- Providing Extended School Year (ESY) services to students with disabilities.
- Working in 11- or 12-month programs at nonpublic special education schools.
- Beginning coaching duties for fall sports, which typically commence in mid-summer.

Additionally, under existing regulations, LEA employees enrolled in approved alternative teacher preparation

programs, called Resident Teacher Programs, must complete a minimum four-week practicum before becoming a "teacher of record." Per current regulation, their license is not issued until *after* this practicum. As written, SB 648 would inadvertently bar these candidates from the classroom interaction required to earn their license.

The State Board and MSDE propose the committee strike the following language in SB 648 (p. 2, line 20-21):

(2) ENSURE THAT EACH INDIVIDUAL WHO RECEIVES AN OFFER SPECIFIED UNDER ITEM (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION:

(I) APPLIES FOR THE APPROPRIATE LICENSE AFTER THE OFFER OF EMPLOYMENT AND BEFORE THE START OF EMPLOYMENT; AND

(II) OBTAINS THE APPROPRIATE LICENSE ~~BEFORE ANY INTERACTION WITH CHILDREN.~~

With this amendment, the State Board and MSDE extend their support for **SB 648**. For further information, please contact Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of Government Affairs, at 443-571-5461 or Laurel.Cratsley@maryland.gov.

SB 648 - SWA - Education ID Clearinghouse (final).

Uploaded by: Sam Mathias

Position: FWA

BILL: Senate Bill 648
TITLE: Local School Systems – Educator Screening – Educator Identification Clearinghouse (School Personnel Vetting and Hiring Transparency Act)
HEARING DATE: March 4, 2026
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
CONTACT: Sam Mathias, Legal & Policy Director (smathias@mabe.org)

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all 24 local boards of education across the State, **supports Senate Bill 648.**

Senate Bill 648 requires that each local school system become an associate member of a national membership organization that provides access to the Educator Identification Clearinghouse to screen prospective educators. It requires the Maryland State Department of Education to pay for membership fees of all local school boards, and for local school boards to screen candidates through the Clearinghouse.

The Clearinghouse contemplated by this bill is the only known national database that includes records of administrative actions such as admonishments, suspensions, and license revocations issued in other states. It is designed to supplement, not replace, traditional criminal background checks. Because many educator misconduct cases are resolved administratively rather than through the criminal justice system, the Clearinghouse provides an additional safeguard to identify individuals who may pose a risk to students but would not be flagged through standard background screening.

Many Maryland school systems already use and pay for access to this Clearinghouse. Centralizing membership through the Maryland State Department of Education and having the state take on the cost to provide statewide access ensures consistent screening practices across jurisdictions and strengthens student safety protections. This approach is both practical and cost effective for local boards.

MABE appreciates the sponsors of this bill and its cross-file in the House, and their work with MSDE for refining the bill to create a workable statewide structure. While we fully support the bill's intent, ***MABE respectfully requests a clarifying amendment to remove the language making a local school system ensure that each individual who receives an offer has a license fully issued before "any interaction with students."*** Although well-intentioned, this provision could unintentionally create barriers for pre-screened, qualified educators whose paperwork is still being processed. In practice, licensure issuance can be delayed for reasons outside of a candidate's control, and certainly outside

of a local board's control, even when all safety screenings have been successfully cleared. Removing this final clause, while retaining the requirement that candidates apply for licensure upon offer of employment, preserve the bill's important safety objectives while allowing reasonable operational flexibility during the hiring and licensure process.

Otherwise, ***we support an amendment (if desired) to move the date from October 1, 2026 to August 1, 2026 by which local school systems must use the Clearinghouse to screen individuals offered employment.***

Therefore, **MABE supports Senate Bill 648 with the minor amendments outlined above.**