



Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director
1217 S. Potomac Street
Baltimore, MD 21224
410-935-7281
marypat.fannon@pssam.org

BILL: HB 473
TITLE: Education - Collective Bargaining - Certificated Employees - Class Size
DATE: February 17, 2026
POSITION: Unfavorable
COMMITTEE: House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four Maryland local school superintendents, **opposes** House Bill 473.

House Bill 473 adds class size to permissible collective bargaining topics. These agreements are negotiated annually through a highly regulated process with an established and successful dispute resolution process.

School systems strive to establish the most reasonable and equitable class size for every grade and student population, including variations for smaller special education classes, and larger classes for gifted and talented courses. Currently, superintendents and their boards have the flexibility to use their best judgement on class size and scheduling as a time management tool. More importantly, in keeping with the tenets of the Blueprint, class size is used to appropriate funds where they are most needed in any given year.

The majority of an LEA's budget is dedicated to personnel, 84-94% for most systems. Creating a rigid mandate arising out of negotiations around class sizes removes a hugely important management and budget tool. Obviously the most immediate need would be for additional teachers and their associated benefits (health insurance, professional development, retirement, etc.).

Superintendents are sympathetic and largely agree with preferences for smaller classes, but class size limitations have severe cost impacts. A simple example illustrates this point - in one medium size district a reduction of an average class size from 30 to a negotiated maximum of 25 would result in a 16% percent increase in personnel costs. Multiplying that across the entire district would result in a large increase in the number of required staff and associated costs.

In addition to wage pressure, class size limits would stress districts who are already struggling with school construction needs and capital planning. Maryland's public school systems are currently facing an unprecedented school construction backlog including maintenance of aging buildings, overcrowding, and health and safety upgrades - all in the context of rapidly escalating construction costs.

Class size is fluid and constantly changing; maintaining a specific mandate would be a significant operational challenge. Negotiating class size severely hinders a school's ability to address instructional needs at specific grades and is also subjective based on many different factors including content, student experience, and social economic conditions. Class assignments are determined after much thought and collaboration between principals and school staff. For instance, some classes or teachers may do well with 23 students while another has 17. But, if the maximum were set at 20, 3 students would have to be moved arbitrarily. Some schools combine resource classes such as PE, Art, and Music to provide planning time for subject matter teachers; this would prohibit or hamper that practice. Small schools may combine grades, or may only have one teacher per grade level for elementary or subject matter for high school, but could be required to hire additional teachers based on a mandated class size.

Class size is directly related to instruction and should not be subject to collective bargaining. Establishing class size requirements within a collective bargaining agreement restricts the school administration's decision-making about the most effective use of staff, space, and scarce financial resources.

Lastly, it is important to note that the Kirwan Commission considered and rejected mandating smaller class sizes. They believed there was no conclusive research that smaller classes were responsible for student success, and that small classes were not a characteristic of successful schools around the world. While as educators we question this conclusion, the important point is that funding was not included in the Blueprint to have the flexibility to reduce class sizes. Further, the Blueprint calls for increases in teacher salaries and more planning time (60% teaching and 40% planning), which will require additional staff.

In conclusion, we ask the committee's consideration of the issues described above, recognizing that placing a cap on class sizes or allowing this to be a topic of negotiations would limit a system's ability to allocate resources where they are most appropriate. Local boards and superintendents need to be able to invest in the students and families who need us most, and must retain the right to negotiate with their unions on topics and matters that reflect the specific and diverse academic and operational needs of their system.

For these reasons, PSSAM respectfully **opposes** House Bill 473 and urges an **unfavorable** report.