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**House Bill 473: Education - Collective Bargaining - Certificated Employees - Class Size
Government, Labor and Elections Committee
February 17, 2026, 1pm
Favorable**

Good afternoon Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and Members of the Committee:

My name is George Hendricks, and I am a Field Representative for the Baltimore Teachers Union. President Brown is currently in negotiations and is unable to attend this hearing, although she sends her regards. On behalf of the Baltimore Teachers Union, we urge a favorable report on this bill to make class size a permissive subject of collective bargaining.

For too long, class size has been treated as a managerial prerogative rather than a shared educational priority. Making class size bargainable simply ensures that the educators who are responsible for delivering instruction have a meaningful voice in shaping the conditions under which that instruction occurs.

We know from both research and experience that smaller class sizes support stronger academic outcomes, especially in the early grades and for students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and students living in concentrated poverty. In large classes, teachers have less opportunity for individualized instruction, differentiated supports, relationship-building, and timely feedback. Overcrowded classrooms make it harder to manage behavior constructively, to implement restorative practices effectively, and to ensure student safety. Class size is also deeply connected to educational equity. Schools serving students with the greatest needs too often have the largest classes. Without bargaining rights, educators have limited recourse to address these disparities.

This bill is part of a multi-faceted strategy to improve educator recruitment and retention. Excessive class sizes are one of the top drivers of burnout. In a time of persistent staffing shortages, we cannot afford to ignore one of the most significant contributors to educators leaving the profession.

Some may argue that class size decisions require flexibility. Collective bargaining does not eliminate flexibility; it formalizes it. Collective bargaining agreements on class size can and do include phased in approaches, differentiated caps, waivers, side letters, and collaborative staffing committees. Bargaining creates stability, predictability, and shared accountability. It prevents unilateral decisions that destabilize school communities midyear.

At its core, this bill affirms a simple principle: the conditions under which educators work are the conditions under which students learn. Class size shapes instructional quality, school climate, educator retention, and student outcomes. It belongs at the bargaining table.

For these reasons, the Baltimore Teachers Union respectfully requests a favorable report on this bill.