



BILL: House Bill 473
TITLE: Education—Collective Bargaining—Certificated Employees—Class Size
HEARING DATE: February 17, 2026
POSITION: UNFAVORABLE
COMMITTEE: Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
CONTACT: Jamie Brown, Paralegal & Legislative Representative, 301-766-2946

The Washington County Board of Education opposes making class size a permissible subject of collective bargaining and, accordingly, opposes House Bill 473, which would shift core management decisions into collective bargaining. Allowing certificated employee representatives to bargain class size on behalf of its members is contrary to the decades-long precedent that determined class size is a significant matter of education policy that should be decided by the local board of education and not at the bargaining table.

Expanding the scope of collective bargaining to include class size would limit a board of education's and superintendent's ability to effectively manage staffing and resources at a time when local school systems are already experiencing staffing shortages and limited resources. There is the very real risk of an even greater staffing shortage across the state when you couple class size bargaining with The Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Blueprint) collaborative planning time initiative, which requires additional staffing. Local school systems would be forced to hire less experienced or underqualified teachers in classrooms to the detriment of students in order to fulfill both class size mandates and the collaborative planning time mandate.

In addition, the Blueprint's expansion of public prekindergarten has required many elementary schools to create new prekindergarten classrooms. As a result of the prekindergarten expansion, available space needed for additional elementary classrooms necessitated by the collective bargaining of class size may be limited and even nonexistent at many schools. In such instances local boards of education would have to expend limited capital monies on building renovations or the installation of portable classrooms, which themselves cost approximately \$250,000 each. Local boards of education cannot implement either option quickly or without significant financial strain.

House Bill 473 has the potential to create unfunded mandates if local boards of education do not receive additional funding from the state or local government for both the additional staffing and the facility needs that would likely result with its passage.

The addition of class size to the list of permissible subjects of collective bargaining also increases the likelihood of impasse over staff ratios and resource allocation, which are best decided by the local board of education and superintendent, and removes much needed flexibility to adjust to changing student needs, enrollment patterns, and instructional priorities.

The Washington County Board of Education opposes House Bill 473 and respectfully requests the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee issue an unfavorable report.

Thank you.

cc: Washington County Board of Education Members
Washington County Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly
Dr. David T. Sovine, Superintendent
Dr. Gary Willow, Deputy Superintendent
Mr. Jeffrey Proulx, Chief Operating Officer