
TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF HOUSE BILL 1492

Collective Bargaining - Public Employees - Revocation of Certification and School and Library Employees' Right to Strike *Government, Labor, and Elections Committee* March 11, 2026

Social Work Advocates for Social Change strongly supports HB 1492, which will give public school and library systems employees the right to strike, prevent the Public Employee Relations Board from removing an employee organization's exclusive right to represent their employees, and prevent employers from retaliating. Additionally, it would protect employees from retaliation. Together, these would enhance important employee rights and protections, especially amid public workforce shortages.

HB 1492 will help address Maryland's longstanding and enduring teaching workforce shortage. According to the State Board of Education, 10.7% of Maryland's teachers did not return to the workforce in the 2023-2024 academic year.¹ Teachers' current workload makes it difficult to establish a strong work-life balance. With classroom sizes ranging from 20-30 or more students, educators find it increasingly difficult to attend to students' individual academic and social emotional needs as well as their own. Many even report having to work during their designated breaks. In order for teachers to build personal capacity to better meet their students' needs, Maryland would need to hire upwards of 10,000 new teachers.² Although conditional teaching licenses have allowed the state to decrease the gaps in staffing,³ enhancing pathways to full licensure and supporting licensed teachers who are advocating for improved working conditions should be a priority for the General Assembly.

HB 1492 empowers teachers and librarians to use one of the most effective tools available to workers to improve working conditions: strikes, which teachers and other workers have long used to support negotiations to improve compensation and working conditions. In an examination of the effects of teacher strikes over a five-year period, researchers determined that student-teacher ratios improved by 3.2%. Employee benefits, such as healthcare, have historically shown increases between 6-9% following a strike. Furthermore, strikes have resulted in increased funding for staff, like nurses and social workers, who are also essential for supporting student needs.⁴ There was no definitive evidence that strikes affect students' reading or math achievement in the year of the strike or in the subsequent five years after the strike, on average.⁵

Upholding the dignity and worth of an individual is a core social work value that guides our coalition's work. We seek to enhance educators' ability to address their identified needs within their workplaces. Educators are strong advocates for their students' rights and needs. **It is imperative to expand our educators' ability and protections to advocate for their working conditions and students' learning conditions. We urge a favorable report on HB**



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1492 – so educators and librarians can advocate for themselves, their colleagues, and the young people with whom they work without fear of losing their livelihood.

Social Work Advocates for Social Change is a coalition of MSW students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work that seeks to promote equity and justice through public policy, and to engage the communities impacted by public policy in the policymaking process.

¹ Wright, C. (2024). Maryland's teacher workforce: Supply, demand, and diversity. Maryland State Department of Education.

² Wright, C. (2025a). Teacher recruitment, development, and retention. Maryland State Department of Education.

<https://marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/2025/0128/AM/Teacher-Recruitment-Development-and-Retention-A.pdf>

³ Wright, C. (2025). Teacher workforce update. Maryland State Department of Education.

<https://marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/documents/2025/1209/teacher-workforce-update-a.pdf>

⁴ Mary Ellen Flannery. (2024). *Teacher Strikes Lead to Higher Pay, Lower Class Sizes, More State Funds* | NEA. Nea.org. <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/teacher-strikes-lead-higher-pay-lower-class-sizes-more-state-funds>

⁵ Lyon, M., Arnold, M., Kraft, M., Steinberg, & Steinberg Accelerate, M. (n.d.). *The Effects of Teacher Strikes On Compensation, Working Conditions, and Productivity*. <https://doi.org/10.26300/kvjt-mz02>