

Bill Name: **HB1492**

Position: **Favorable**

To the Members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee,

As a former teacher, I strongly support HB1492 and call for the committee to advance the bill to the House.

Teaching is a famously difficult and time-consuming job. In my years as a teacher in Baltimore City (and my years working in education in Milwaukee), I experienced firsthand the tradeoffs that one has to make in education. When it comes to the workload of the average teacher, leading a classroom is the tip of the iceberg. Teachers must also spend hours lesson planning, grading, contacting parents, and completing reports, among the countless other tasks needed to keep a school running smoothly. When students are below grade-level — as many students in Maryland are — teachers need to plan more carefully and with a greater number of supports. When families are unresponsive, teachers need to spend more time reaching out and collaborating with social workers to make those family connections. As a result, many teachers are forced into an impossible choice — either they can do right by their students, or they can keep some semblance of a personal life. The result of this no-win situation is predictable and concerning: overworked and disaffected teachers, and students who don't get the support they deserve.

In other words, teaching suffers from poor working conditions. The solution to this, in general, is unionization: having an organization that provides workers with some autonomy and decisionmaking power in the workplace. Fortunately, many Maryland teachers are union members, which gives them a mouthpiece to stand up for their own needs and for their students' needs. Unfortunately, these unions lack a crucial tool that private sector unions have access to: the power to strike. Because teachers lack this crucial power, labor agreements between unions and school districts are fragile. We saw a sad example of this in Baltimore County, where the school district refused to follow through on agreed-upon wage increases.

Maryland is in many ways a progressive state, and one that highly values education. The state has shown this commitment through funding for the Blueprint, which promises to increase planning time and align reading instruction with national best practices. However, the state has failed to give teachers a powerful tool to advocate for better education. If the state truly values teachers — and wants to help stem turnover, an ongoing problem for school districts in the state — we need to rectify that oversight.

With all this in mind, I ask the committee to **vote for HB1492**. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Luke Zeigler
7 W Cross St, Baltimore, MD 21230