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BILL: SB 648

TITLE: Local Education Agencies - Educator Screening - Educator Identification Clearinghouse (School Personnel Vetting and Hiring Transparency Act)

DATE: April 1, 2026

POSITION: Favorable

COMMITTEE: House Ways and Means Committee

CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four local school superintendents, **supports** Senate Bill 648.

This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to register each local school system (LSS) in the State as an associate member of a national membership organization that provides access to the Educator Identification Clearinghouse and to pay any applicable fees and dues associated with the membership. Each LSS must use the clearinghouse to screen individuals who receive an offer of employment for an educator position that requires a license on or after August 1, 2026. In addition, each local school system must ensure that each individual who receives such an offer (1) applies for the appropriate license after the offer of employment and before the start of employment and (2) obtains the appropriate license. Nothing in the bill may be construed to impair or affect existing statutory prohibitions against hiring or retaining individuals convicted of specified crimes, including child sexual abuse.

Maryland school systems take their responsibility to ensure the safety of students and staff extremely seriously. We appreciate the bill's emphasis on strengthening student safety and reinforcing the integrity of the licensure process. In particular, we support the provision requiring candidates to apply for licensure at the time they receive an offer of employment. This requirement adds an important layer of screening and reinforces the shared commitment of school systems and the State to student protection.

For these reasons, PSSAM **supports** Senate Bill 648 and respectfully requests a favorable report.