

**SUPPORT**  
**House Bill 1582**  
**Education - Program of Educational Accountability - Alterations**  
**(Comprehensive Outcomes and Measures of Progress for Supporting Schools**  
**(COMPASS Act))**

**House Ways and Means Committee**  
**March 12, 2026**

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The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 1582, which updates existing law related to the state's school accountability system, including altering the school quality indicators, academic indicators, and indicator weights that can be included in a revised Maryland School Report Card system.

MSEA represents 76,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools and community colleges, teaching and supporting our almost 900,000 K-12 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA represents more than 40 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Maryland has long recognized that meaningful school accountability must reflect the full range of conditions that influence student success. In 2017, the General Assembly took an important step forward with the passage of the Protect Our Schools Act, which established guardrails to prevent standardized testing from dominating school ratings and introduced School Quality and Student Success (SQSS) indicators as part of the Maryland School Report Card system.

House Bill 1582 builds on that progress by modernizing Maryland's accountability framework so that it better reflects how students learn, how schools improve, and how educators support student success.

First, the bill creates space to better incorporate student growth measures. Too often, accountability systems emphasize whether students meet a single proficiency threshold rather than recognizing the academic progress students make over time. This approach can obscure the extraordinary work that educators and students accomplish every day, particularly in schools where students begin the year significantly below grade level but make substantial academic growth over the course of the year. By strengthening how student growth is measured and valued, the COMPASS Act allows Maryland's accountability system to more accurately reflect the impact of effective teaching and sustained learning.



Second, House Bill 1582 maintains critical guardrails against over-testing. Educators, families, and students consistently raise concerns about the amount of time devoted to standardized testing and test preparation. The Protect Our Schools Act established important limits on the weight that standardized assessments can carry in school ratings. The COMPASS Act preserves those protections while further ensuring that no single academic indicator dominates the system. These safeguards help ensure that assessments remain tools for improvement rather than drivers of instructional disruption.

Third, the bill strengthens the role of SQSS indicators, ensuring that a broader range of factors informs how schools are evaluated and supported. School climate, student engagement, access to resources, and other indicators of opportunity are essential components of a well-rounded accountability system. By requiring multiple SQSS indicators and meaningful weighting of those indicators, the COMPASS Act promotes a more holistic understanding of school performance.

The legislation also introduces an important opportunity to include staffing indicators as part of SQSS measures. Access to qualified, experienced, and appropriately assigned educators is one of the strongest predictors of student success. Recognizing staffing conditions within the accountability framework acknowledges the central role educators play in supporting student learning and highlights workforce stability as a key component of school quality.

Finally, House Bill 1582 represents an important step toward building an accountability system that is more equity centered. Traditional school rating systems have often closely tracked concentrations of poverty rather than providing meaningful insight into instructional strengths and areas for improvement. By incorporating student growth and multiple measures of school quality, the COMPASS framework helps ensure that accountability systems identify opportunities for improvement while recognizing the progress schools make with their students.

Though changes to the reporting system itself are not prescribed in this bill, MSEA will advocate for an approach that does not allow for a misrepresentation of the data and the findings. While Maryland rightfully prohibits the use of an A-F rating system, there is very little difference between that and the existing one- to-five-star system. And we know in communities most impacted by poverty especially, over-simplified summative labels can reinforce stigmatizing narratives, depress enrollment, undermine school and community morale, and serve as warning lights to families and businesses to not move or invest in the area. Such ratings undermine the very improvement efforts we all seek to achieve.



Instead, we will urge the State Board of Education to adopt a descriptive or dashboard-based reporting system, a holistic model that is already used in 13 states, including Massachusetts, Illinois, and California.<sup>1</sup> A descriptive model approach reduces stigma, highlights root causes, and supports targeted interventions that align with continuous improvement. As we finalize and introduce this revised Maryland School Report Card system, parents and other stakeholders will benefit from a more comprehensive reporting system that does not reduce schools to a single number or rating.

Maryland has an opportunity to continue refining its accountability system so that it provides clearer, more nuanced information to educators, families, and policymakers. The COMPASS Act moves the state toward a model that prioritizes transparency, context, and continuous improvement rather than simplistic labeling.

**MSEA urges a favorable report on House Bill 1582.**

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<sup>1</sup> 50-State Comparison: School Accountability Systems - Rating Systems. Education Commission of the States (2024). <https://reports.ecs.org/comparisons/states-school-accountability-systems-2024-01>