

To the Honorable Ways and Means Committee Members,

My name is Heather Steven, and I am a Social Studies teacher at Broadneck High School in Anne Arundel County Public Schools. I have been a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) since 2009 and renewed my certification in 2019 under the 10-year renewal certificate that was the only option available at that time. I am writing to express my concern about an unintended inequity created by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future that negatively affects veteran NBCT teachers like myself. This oversight is patently unfair and Maryland needs to fix it so that teachers are treated equitably. As a 10 year renewal teacher, I am ineligible to receive any sort of renewal bonus until after other teachers who achieved later have received 2 bonuses under the 5 year Maintenance of Certificate (MOC) cycle.

Under the current structure, teachers who renewed under the former 10-year cycle are arbitrarily ineligible for bonuses that will be awarded to teachers who achieved National Board Certification years after we did. As a result, veteran teachers who earned and maintained certification earlier are placed at a financial disadvantage compared with colleagues who certified later.

Because I renewed in 2019 under the 10-year renewal system, I will not be eligible for another renewal bonus until after other teachers—who certified more recently under the current 5-year Maintenance of Certification (MOC) cycle—have already received two recertification bonuses. In practical terms, this means that I will only have the opportunity to recertify once during the time it takes other teachers to earn two rounds of recertification bonuses.

Within the Anne Arundel County Public Schools Career Ladder structure, this discrepancy will result in a loss of \$8,000 per year from the first recertification bonus and an additional \$7,000 per year from the second. This reduced salary will also negatively affect my pension. I anticipate retiring before I would become eligible for the next recertification cycle, meaning I will never have the opportunity to recover these losses.

It is important to note that when I renewed my certification in 2019, the process required the completion of four components, including two videotaped components—work comparable in scope to the initial certification process. Since then, the testing organization Pearson has reduced the renewal cycle from ten years to five and significantly streamlined the process. Renewal now requires approximately half the work for half the duration. In fairness, teachers who completed the more demanding 10-year renewal should be recognized in a way that reflects the equivalent of two renewal cycles.

Unfortunately, rather than benefiting all NBCT teachers equally, the Blueprint's implementation has unintentionally disadvantaged those who achieved certification earlier while elevating the compensation of teachers who obtained it later. When I first learned how this would affect my salary under the AACPS Career Ladder, I contacted the Teachers Association of Anne Arundel County. I was informed that while Maryland law does not require districts to address this inequity, the county had the discretion to do so but chose not to. In October 2024, when the

AACPS Career Ladder required approval by the Blueprint Accountability and Implementation Board, I wrote to every member explaining the impact on early NBCT teachers.

I recognize that the Blueprint requires substantial state investment and that the \$10,000 annual bonus has appropriately encouraged a large number of teachers to pursue National Board Certification. However, when I first achieved certification, the incentives were far smaller. At that time, the State of Maryland provided a \$2,000 annual stipend and AACPS provided \$1,000. Consequently, relatively few teachers pursued certification, and an even smaller number remain under the older 10-year renewal structure.

When I was teaching at Glen Burnie High School, I was the only teacher in the entire school with National Board Certification. After transferring to Broadneck High School, no one in my department held the certification until after 2021. Today there are only about 100 teachers in all of AACPS who fall under the 10-year renewal category. Addressing this inequity would therefore affect a very small number of educators while correcting a significant and unintended disparity.

Since the passage of the Blueprint, I have actively supported colleagues pursuing National Board Certification. I have reviewed and provided feedback on written components for multiple teachers and recorded video lessons for six teachers in my department. By encouraging teachers to pursue certification and leadership opportunities, I have helped foster reflective practice and improved student learning beyond my own classroom. Yet under the current Career Ladder structure, some of the teachers I mentored will ultimately earn more than I will for maintaining the same certification.

This inequity stems from a technical oversight that affects only a small percentage of teachers and could be corrected through targeted legislative action. Addressing this issue would ensure that veteran NBCT teachers are treated equitably and that Maryland continues to value those who have long demonstrated excellence in teaching.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Heather Steven
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