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Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Capital Budget

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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TESTIMONY OF SENATOR SHELLY HETTLEMAN
SB 648 - Local School Systems - Educator Screening - Educator
Identification Clearinghouse (School Personnel Vetting and Hiring
Transparency Act)

The School Personnel Vetting and Hiring Transparency Act advances student safety in Maryland by strengthening transparency and accountability in educator hiring practices. The bill requires every local education agency (LEA) to use the NASDTEC Educator Identification Clearinghouse as part of the process for hiring and reviewing educators. Recent events at Pikesville High School exposed shortcomings in the current system, where a former athletic director, who was later charged with multiple serious offenses, was able to secure employment without sufficient screening. This situation revealed critical gaps in Maryland's vetting procedures and demonstrated how failures in oversight can place students in harm's way.

Educators and school staff hold positions of immense trust, shaping not only academic outcomes but also the emotional and physical safety of students. Yet weaknesses in existing screening practices have allowed individuals with documented misconduct to move between school districts without detection. Addressing these vulnerabilities is essential to ensuring that those working in Maryland schools meet the highest professional and ethical standards.

SBO648 addresses this problem by establishing a consistent, statewide approach to educator screening. Under the bill, all LEAs must become associate members of the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification

(NASDTEC) and are required to screen prospective hires through its Educator Identification Clearinghouse. This national system enables states and school districts to access critical information like license revocations, disciplinary actions, and ethical violations that may not appear in traditional background checks.

The Clearinghouse does not replace existing hiring procedures or impose additional burdens on school systems. Instead, it serves as an early warning mechanism, flagging concerns that warrant closer review. By ensuring that decision-makers have access to comprehensive and current information, SB0648 supports sound hiring practices and helps safeguard students and school staff. Ultimately, this legislation is about creating uniform standards that prioritize student well-being and reinforce the integrity of Maryland's education system. Families deserve confidence that those entrusted with educating their children have been thoroughly screened, and administrators deserve reliable tools to prevent individuals with a history of misconduct from slipping through the system. SB0648 strengthens protections for students by adding an essential layer of accountability to the educator hiring process statewide. I respectfully urge the Committee to give SB0648 a favorable report.