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Letter of Information

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee ***Senate Bill 771 – Education – Initial Teacher Certification - Requirements***

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February 23, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a letter of information for [SB 771 \(Washington\) Education - Initial Teacher Certification - Requirements](#). We are writing on behalf of the Maryland Education Deans Council representing all twenty-two (22) Education Deans and Directors at the University System of Maryland (USM), Maryland Independent College and University Association (MICUA) institutions, Morgan State University, and St. Mary's College of Maryland. This bill repeals a provision of law that requires passing a nationally recognized, portfolio-based assessment of teaching ability as a requirement for graduation; alters the requirements for initial teacher certification; repeals the initial certification requirement to pass a rigorous State-specific examination of mastery of reading instruction and content for the grade level the individual will be teaching; and makes a more efficient and effective process for initial certification of qualified teachers and other school personnel educated or credentialed in other states.

Addressing the critical teacher shortage in Maryland could be the single most important job of every public policy maker in the State. Educating our children is the only way to preserve our democracy, invest in our prosperity, and build the kind of compassionate and caring communities we all want to live in. We support well-conceived proposals that would dislodge the logjam of regulations, and encourage creative and innovative pathways to make a career in teaching an attractive and highly rewarding career.

Without the cadre of high quality and diverse teachers called for in the Blueprint, we will fail on every other pillar of that groundbreaking law. As Linda Darling Hammond stated in her most famous 1997 landmark report, and as she restated to the Kirwan Commission during their hearings: "Teachers matter most." Who does not want the very best teacher for their child or grandchild?

SB771 addresses immediate, short-term shortages by streamlining the regulatory process and recognizing that we need to start with the teachers who are already in the classrooms, and help them become fully licensed so they can step boldly and confidently into their classrooms and their professions.

While the current bill accomplishes the short term goals, we hope that the deliberations around the implementation of this bill would include consideration of the long term commitment to Maryland's highly regarded program approval standards, which are grounded in the most compelling rigorous research about what teachers need to know and do when they assume full responsibility for children's learning. In other words, it is critical for key stakeholders to look beyond the current shortages and commit to long-term partnerships that grow a diverse, capable, and confident workforce for Maryland students. There is no quick fix to the teacher shortage. The research is clear, collaboration between IHEs and school district partners is the only evidence-based solution to addressing the current challenges facing Maryland schools.

The higher ed community is committed to partnering with local school districts to make sure that teachers know not only what to teach (their subject expertise), but also that they know how to teach (expertise in creating positive learning environments for all children). In this respect, we hope to join our practitioner colleagues in the schools to support the induction, mentoring and coaching in the early years as beginning teachers advance their skills and expertise to make data-informed instructional decisions to meet the needs of all students.

We agree that the elimination of basic skills tests (such as Praxis I), may address some of the barriers to teaching for some students. Those skills are more than made up for by the requirement for teachers to complete bachelor's degrees in their subject area. But, we also agree that performance assessments are important teaching tools that help new teachers grow.

Performance assessment reflects what teachers do every day—plan, teach, assess, reflect. Unlike a standardized multiple choice content test, it mirrors what candidates will be doing every day as teachers. Thus, it is a critical piece in the overall assessment process of teacher candidates. Without performance-based assessments, teacher candidates have not engaged in a rigorous process of data-informed instruction and reflection. It is this continuous focus on pedagogy that allows candidates to begin experiencing impactful instruction for all students. A collaborative classroom-based assessment of performance will support beginning teachers in their journey toward resilience and retention. We believe the continuation of performance assessments serves as an on-ramp to the effectiveness represented by the gold-standard of National Board Certification.

We also expect the State Department of Education to continue to hold all programs to high standards. The State Department of Education approval process, which should be constructed as a collaboration between practitioners and researchers, is the best way to strengthen rigorous and comprehensive educator preparation programs and assess and improve alternative programs so that all teachers who teach in Maryland schools are well prepared and supported.

Finally, we would embrace the opportunity to re-establish the P-20 Council that brings together all relevant constituent groups to work shoulder to shoulder to tackle the complex educational priorities that are the hallmarks of Maryland’s future as outlined in the Blueprint legislation. We all recognize that “it takes a village,” and it takes a fully engaged partnership across educational segments to create the educational foundation for all our children upon which our democracy depends.

University System of Maryland Institutions

Bowie State University	University of Maryland,	University of Maryland
Coppin State University	Baltimore County	Eastern Shore
Frostburg State University	University of Maryland,	University of Maryland
Salisbury University	College Park	Global Campus
Towson University		

Maryland Independent College and University Association Institutions

Goucher University	Notre Dame of Maryland	Mount St. Mary’s University
Hood College	University	Stevenson University
Johns Hopkins University	Maryland Institute College of	Washington Adventist
Loyola University Maryland	Art	University
	McDaniel College	Washington College

Other Maryland Public Institutions

Morgan State University
 Saint Mary’s College of Maryland