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BILL: House Bill 479
TITLE: Education - Salaries of Noncertificated Public School Employees -
Minimum Living Salaries
DATE: February 14, 2019
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means Committee
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the state's local boards of education, opposes House Bill 479.

This bill would require school systems, which are fiscally dependent on state, local and federal funding already budgeted for express purposes, to provide at least the minimum salaries set in state law. MABE is alarmed at the proposition that school systems would be the subject of such legislation, especially in light of the State funded study evidencing the substantial underfunding of public education at current funding levels.

Specifically, House Bill 479 would mandate that all school systems pay their noncertificated employees at least a minimum salary beginning in FY 2021 and increasing significantly through FY 2014. MABE is struck by the magnitude of the proposed fiscal impact on local school systems if this bill were to be enacted. And to be clear, these estimates do not fully encompass the costs of implementing the bill's additional mandate that school system contracts require contractors to comply with the living wage requirement as well.

Today, school systems continue to struggle to sustain successful academic programs, for which we have received national recognition, while at the same time adjusting to the continuing and now decade-long constraints on local, state and federal funding for public education. Local boards are taking great care to control costs in order to optimize the value of the dollars provided; and budget directors and procurement officers are working diligently to maximize the value of school system purchases of goods and services. In this context, MABE does not believe the costly and time consuming mandates included in this bill represent a prudent use of scarce resources.

MABE believes that the women and men who work for the public school system are the key to educating our young people. The success of public schools throughout the State is dependent on the work of not only some 60,000 educators, but thousands of dedicated staff providing essential services to students. For our noncertificated staff such services include: student transportation, administrative services, food service, facility maintenance, classroom instructional assistance, and many more positions.

When additional funding is provided by our respective funding authorities, school systems stand ready, and are obligated by law, to negotiate in good faith with the bargaining unit representatives for our noncertificated staff on salaries, wages, and working conditions. However, in the absence of a major infusion of additional state and local budget allocations, an unfunded mandate of the magnitude proposed in this bill would not be achievable without major disruption, and cuts, in the school system budget allocations for other essential programs and services.

For these reasons, MABE urges an unfavorable report on House Bill 479.