

BILL: House Bill 1157
TITLE: Grow Your Own Educators Grant Program - Established
DATE: February 21, 2024
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
Appropriations
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports House Bill 1157 to establish the Grow Your Own Educators Grant Program to facilitate the development of licensed classroom teachers from the ranks of educational support professionals, or paraeducators, already experienced and dedicated to student learning in classrooms across the State.

All local boards of education value the essential role of the educators and staff persons who work for the public school system as the keys to educating and meeting the needs of our students. Therefore, MABE has consistently supported efforts by the General Assembly to assist local school systems in addressing the critical shortages of highly qualified teachers, principals, and other staff in every school and the classrooms of all students across the State. At this time, Maryland is experiencing critical shortages across all of the educational and related services professional fields; a critical shortage of the staff needed to deliver and support student learning and to administer schools as educational leaders.

In the 2023 legislative session, MABE supported several bills, including the Governor's Educator Shortage Reduction Act (HB 1219, Ch. 627), which became law and includes major initiatives to expand the alternative teacher certification program to include educators in prekindergarten programs, create a new Maryland Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Diversity Dashboard, reform the Teachers Fellows for Maryland scholarship program. MABE believes that passing House Bill 1157 will significantly advance the work already underway to expand the scope of educational pathways for our education support staff to become highly qualified teachers.

MABE is generally supportive of the state taking bold, innovative steps to build Maryland's teacher pipeline and workforce. House Bill 1157, by creating a new Grow Your Own Educators Grant Program within the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), would meaningfully enhance state efforts to promote the profession of teaching as a career path for many more talented Marylanders who may not be aware of the rapidly improving compensation and working conditions under the Blueprint, and who would benefit for the opportunity for advancement created through this new program.

Local boards firmly believe that the role of a full complement of qualified staff, including large numbers of new teachers, will be pivotal to the successful implementation of Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The Blueprint features major expansions of full-day prekindergarten, student behavioral health services, college readiness courses, and career and technical education programs. Passage of House Bill 1157 will certainly advance the statewide effort to recruit, educate, and retain the professional educators essential to meet these objectives.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 1157.