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BILL: House Bill 789
TITLE: Primary and Secondary Education – Public School Employees – Salaries
DATE: February 14, 2024
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports House Bill 789 toward the goal of including non-classroom teachers and other educators and education professionals within the scope of the significant salary increases and guaranteed minimum salaries provided by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

MABE has consistently supported efforts by the General Assembly to assist local school systems in addressing the critical shortages of not only highly qualified teachers but also other highly valued staff in every school 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.

The pandemic heightened public awareness regarding the severity of scope of the mental and behavioral health needs of students, and the lack of adequate professional staff to meet these needs. MABE therefore supports the intent of House Bill 789 to include these staff in the benefits of the Blueprint. In this way, the Blueprint can be even more effective to recruit high school and college students to pursue degrees in fields such as school counseling, school psychology, and school social work. In addition, educators providing direct services to students, but not as classroom teachers, can be compensated based on their respective national certifications on par with their colleagues as they work side-by-side in schools. In this light, MABE urges consideration of future state investments in short and long-term solutions to providing the wide array of professional resources our students deserve. House Bill 789, if fully funded and given time to be incorporated in the Blueprint and state and local budgets, would contribute significantly to these ends.

Again, MABE firmly believes that the role of a full complement of qualified staff will be pivotal to the successful implementation of Blueprint for Maryland's Future and the highest benchmarks of student progress and success in attaining college and career readiness. However, the costs of expanding the scope of the Blueprint will be daunting and always competing for limited state and local revenues with other priorities such as expanding PreK.

All local boards of education value the essential role of each educator and staff person who work for the public school system as the key to educating and meeting the needs of our students. Unfortunately, Maryland continues to experience a major teacher shortage due to a number of factors including the low number of teacher candidates graduating from Maryland's universities, the number of potential teachers entering the profession, and the competitiveness of working condition and salaries. Again, MABE greatly appreciates that the Blueprint addresses these issues by mandating minimum salaries of \$60,000 for teachers, providing raises for teachers based on National Board Certification, and reducing the amount of time teachers are obligated to be in classrooms. However, the Blueprint inappropriately excludes many highly valued educators, essential to student success, from the salary increases and other provisions of the Blueprint.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 789, with an amendment to clarify that the minimum starting salary would not become \$60,000 for all school employees, but for all certificated educators and staff providing instruction and related professional services to students in schools.