

BILL: Senate Bill 377
TITLE: Higher Education - Teacher Development and Retention Program - Definition
DATE: March 26, 2024
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Appropriations
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports Senate Bill 377 to include community colleges in the program established to provide stipends to students pursuing teaching careers in higher education.

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 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. Specifically, the Educator Shortage Reduction Act established the Teacher Development and Retention Program as a pilot program to incentivize a cohort of students to pursue a career in the teaching profession. MABE believes that passing Senate Bill 377 will significantly advance the work already underway to expand the scope of educational pathways and financial supports for individuals studying to become highly qualified teachers.

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 Senate Bill 377 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 Senate Bill 377.