

BILL: Senate Bill 771
TITLE: Education - Initial Teacher Certification - Requirements
DATE: February 23, 2024
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports Senate Bill 771 to make several meaningful improvements to the statewide system of assessing and licensing teachers in Maryland.

MABE supports the key provisions of this bill which would repeal the requirement that a teacher preparation program require passing a nationally recognized portfolio-based assessment of teaching ability as a requirement for graduation, and modify the requirements to qualify for an initial teaching certificate. Beginning July 1, 2025, an individual seeking an initial teaching certificate, including graduates from teacher preparation programs outside of the State, could meet one of four qualifications: (1) passing a nationally recognized portfolio-based assessment of teaching ability; (2) passing a basic skills assessment; (3) holding a degree from a regionally accredited educational institution and have earned a minimum overall cumulative grade point average of 3.0; or (4) submitting documentation satisfactory to the Maryland Department of Education (MSDE). MABE endorses these provisions.

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 prior introduction of this bill, as well as the Governor's Educator Shortage Reduction Act (HB 1219, Ch. 627). The Educator Shortage Act 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 Senate Bill 771 will significantly advance the work already underway to expand the scope of educational opportunities for individuals 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 771 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 771.