

**Testimony in Support of
House Bill 186 - Nancy Grasmick Teacher Award – Eligibility**

Joseph Mahach

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Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Joseph Mahach and I am a teacher in Baltimore City Schools and a resident in the Urban Teachers alternative certification program. I am a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, a former youth sports coach, and a resident of Baltimore City.

I am here in support of HB 186 for reasons beyond just student loans. I don't need to remind the committee why some schools lost their Title I funding this year, but I would like to share the impact that this bill would have on me as a new teacher. Many of us in education are cautiously optimistic about our futures. We see work that the legislature and the Kirwan Commission have done and we cannot help but imagine a future of fully funded schools - schools with adequate materials, superb staffing, and pristine facilities. However, while we are hopeful, we are also wary of the political process and what may actually come from all of this talk about a "world class school system" in Maryland. To be frank, I am not entirely convinced that I will have a robust pension when I retire from Baltimore City Schools many years from now. I am not convinced that all of this current talk will result in substantive change for schools in Maryland. Again, I don't need to remind this committee what a large task lay ahead, however, here today, we are discussing something that we can accomplish, something tangible for teachers who have been caught in a unique and unfortunate situation.

By passing HB 186, you can tell teachers that you are looking out for them. You can show us that funding education isn't just a discussion of best practices and budget calculations. You can show teachers that yes, the state of Maryland is committed to world class education, but that doesn't mean that you will lose sight of the details that make a career in teaching just that little bit easier.

I think we can agree that great teachers make great schools, and while nobody gets into teaching for the money, they do get out of teaching for it.

Thank you for the work that you do and thank you for your time.