
**Testimony in Support with Amendments for House Bill 348
AP Opportunities Act of 2020**

**House Ways and Means Committee
February 5, 2020
2:00 PM**

**Sean Johnson
Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 348, legislation that creates Advanced Placement (AP) exam fee funding for students with financial needs. This is a good policy proposal that should be guaranteed beyond FY21. MSEA proposes adding an amendment to require a mandated appropriation in future years at the same level in the proposed Budget Bill, SB 190/HB 150.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our 896,837 students for careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

AP exam fees, even reduced by the College Board to \$53 per exam for students with financial needs, can be a barrier to access to participate in an exam that could earn course credits in college. This barrier is real in Maryland. As the policy note points out, while 36% of high school students qualify for free or reduced priced meals (FRPM), only 14% of 110,200 AP exams taken in 2018 were from FRPM qualifying students. A funded AP Opportunities Act will increase this participation rate and, at a minimum, better prepare students for college-level classes and, in the best case scenario, actually earn them credits that could save thousands of dollars in higher education tuition expenses.

Luckily, a majority of school districts in the state already provide this financial benefit with the help of federal funds. This state commitment could fill the void in the districts that don't cover this cost today and will offset the cost for the districts that do, thereby freeing up local resources to help expand other programs or supports in the school.

MSEA urges a favorable report of House Bill 348 with an amendment to include a mandated appropriation for future budgets.