



Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director

BILL: House Bill 1074 – Education – Collective Bargaining – Certified Employees – Class Size
DATE: February 28, 2020
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director

This bill repeals the prohibition against a public school employer and employee organization negotiating the maximum number of students assigned to a class during collective bargaining.

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), representing all twenty-four local school superintendents, **opposes** House Bill 1074.

PSSAM strongly believes it is critical that locally-governed education policies and procedures remain under the authority of boards of education and local elected leaders. Each school board must have the right to negotiate with their unions on topics and matters that reflect the specific and diverse academic and operational needs of their system.

While school administrators and school board members are sympathetic with the teacher preference for smaller classes, class size limitations have severe cost impacts. Here is a simple example to illustrate this - a reduction of the average class size from 30 to a negotiated maximum of 25 students would result in a 16-2/3 percent increase in teacher salary costs. Multiplying that across the entire district would result in a large increase in the number of required FTEs. Establishing class size requirements within a collective bargaining agreement restricts the school administration's decision-making about the most effective use of staff, space, and scarce financial resources. In addition to wage pressure, consider the facility needs associated with smaller classes. Districts are already struggling with school construction needs and mandating class sizes would force major changes in capital planning.

Class size is a major public policy issue that must be left to elected school boards in order to address standards and priorities. Operationally, negotiating class size severely hinders the school's ability to address instruction needs at specific grade levels and or content areas. Also, class size is subjective variance based on many different factors including content, student experience, social economic conditions, etc. Class size is fluid and constantly changing so maintaining a specific mandate would be a significant operational challenge.

Class assignments are determined after much thought and collaboration between principals and school staff. Negotiating specific sizes limits schools' flexibility in scheduling and class assignments based on their school's individual needs. For instance, some classes may do well with 23 students while another has 17. However, if the maximum were set at 20, 3 students would have to be moved. Depending on the

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students and their abilities, you could end up creating more problems. Class size is directly related to instruction and should not be subject to collective bargaining. Lastly, it is important to note that the Kirwan Commission actually recommended increasing class sizes in their final report.

PSSAM strongly urges the committee to respect the local bargaining independence of each board and its teachers; therefore, we urge an **unfavorable** committee report.