

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF FREDERICK COUNTY

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Bill: House Bill 1044

Title: Frederick County – Education – Apprentice Teachers

Position: SUPPORT

Date: March 6, 2020

Committee: Ways & Means Committee

Contact: Karen Yoho, Member, Frederick County Board of Education

The Board of Education of Frederick County, which governs a school system with more than 44,000 students and 6,000 employees, supports House Bill 1044.

It will come as no surprise to the members of this committee that there is a nationwide teacher shortage looming. Our state and county are not excluded from this shortage. Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) started the 2019-20 school year with 15.5 FTE teaching vacancies. As of February 15, 2020, we still had 6.4 FTE open positions. What this means for our students is that they are not being taught by a well-trained, highly effective teacher with whom they can come to have a consistent relationship. If those students are fortunate, they will have one long-term substitute, as long as that substitute can commit to the time necessary to be there every day. If not, there could be a succession of substitutes coming in to piece together a patchwork of instruction. This is not what we want for our students.

So where should we look to find teacher candidates? FCPS has the Teacher Academy of Maryland (TAM) at our Career and Technology Center. The students at the TAM have shown their commitment to making teaching their future career. This would be the first place from which we would recruit candidates for the Teacher Apprentice cohort. Additionally, we could focus on recruiting minority candidates, which addresses an associated need as well.

Another potential pool of applicants is from within the ranks of our FCPS instructional assistants. They are members of our community. They are already employees in our schools, they are already working with our students, and they already know many of the demands of the job. For some, the need to work outweighed the possibility of attending college to pursue a teaching degree. Yet, the desire is still there.

Whether our candidates are recent high school graduates or employed as instructional assistants, we all know that college is not affordable for many. This is where Del. Kerr's legislation comes in. If passed, this bill would provide matching funds for five teacher apprenticeships in the first cohort. Each week, the teacher apprentices would work approximately 20 hours in their instructional assistant roles and attend classes for 15 hours. This program would allow the participants to secure benefits, and additionally would pay for the tuition, fees, and textbooks in the apprentice teacher program.

The teacher shortage is not just a theoretical concern; it is a current issue for FCPS. HB 1044 will allow us to creatively work on finding an alternate solution to a problem while providing an opportunity for our students and/or current support employees.

For these reasons, the Board of Education of Frederick County respectfully requests that the committee issue a favorable report on House Bill 1044.