

KENNETH P. KERR, ED.D
Legislative District 3B
Frederick County



Annapolis Office
The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 209
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3240 · 301-858-3240
800-492-7122 Ext. 3240
Ken.Kerr@house.state.md.us

Health and Government Operations
Committee

Subcommittees

Health Occupations
and Long Term Care

Insurance and Pharmaceuticals

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

District Office
4539 Metropolitan Court, Suite 257
Frederick, Maryland 21704
301-360-3505

House Bill 1044 - Frederick County – Education – Apprentice Teachers
Teacher Apprentice Program
March 6, 2020

Chair Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and members of the committee:

Several deficiencies and inefficiencies exist in the current practice for teacher preparation. Innovation is needed to meet the goals for teacher recruitment, retention, and training as recommended by the Kirwin Commission.

Almost half of new teachers leave the profession within 5 years of getting their first job. In Maryland, about half have left their first school system after two years—either to a new school system or have left the profession completely.

The reasons for this are varied: poor teacher preparation programs, a lack of support for new teachers, an incomplete understanding on the part of the new teacher as to exactly what the job entails.

Additionally, there is a lack of diversity in the teacher ranks across Maryland as well as a shortage of teachers interested in special education, STEM, and English language acquisition.

Current programs and practices for teacher preparation are inefficient, ineffective, and unresponsive to the ever-changing educational environment. Four years of theory and a few short internships do not give aspiring teachers a full understanding of the requirements, demands, responsibilities, and challenges of the job. Consequently, new teachers struggle, flounder, falter, and half of them leave the profession altogether.

In 1975, nearly a quarter of all college students were education majors. By 2015, that number was less than one-in-ten. Looking ahead, only 4.6% of incoming college freshmen indicate they are interested in becoming teachers. Some states have responded to this crisis by lowering standards. Minnesota, Arizona, Illinois, and Utah have all revamped state requirements to make it easier to become a teacher through less rigorous degree requirements. This is not an option for Maryland.

Compensation is another challenge. In Maryland, the average starting salary for a new teacher is \$45,000. New college graduates in other professions can expect a starting salary 25% higher--\$60,000—with the same 4-year degree.

How it Works:

Apprentice teachers are hired at a similar pay rate and with similar job tasks and responsibilities as instructional assistants. Typically this is for a full 35-hour workweek. Where things differ is how those 35 hours are spent. The apprentice spends 20 hours-per-week assisting an experienced teacher in the classroom. It may help to think in terms of a Monday-Wednesday-Friday schedule. The other 15-hours-per-week would be spent in college working on the courses required of a teaching degree—a Tuesday/Thursday course schedule. This classroom component is part of the apprenticeship experience and a necessary precursor to obtaining the bachelor of education degree and becoming a certified Maryland teacher.

If the apprentice has family income under \$150,000 and completed high school in Maryland in the past three years, he or she is eligible for the Maryland Community College Promise scholarship. This is the most likely candidate for an apprenticeship. This would mean there is no cost to the apprentice or the apprentice sponsor for the first two years of the coursework component of the apprenticeship.

If at any time during the first two years of the apprenticeship either the apprentice or the sponsor does not wish to continue the apprenticeship, the agreement is simply not renewed the following academic semester. As the apprentice enters the third (junior class) year of the coursework, each party enters into an agreement that commits the apprentice to completing the degree, accepting a position with the sponsoring school district, and staying in that job for a minimum of five years. The sponsor agrees to continue to employ and support the apprentice for the remainder of the apprenticeship and guarantees a teaching position at the completion of the apprenticeship and degree.

What does this Program do for Maryland?

1. As stated above, 50% of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years. This occurs because they were inadequately prepared or not well suited for the job, and they don't find this out until they are into their first year as a teacher. However, the apprenticeship fully prepares—through hands-on experience—the apprentice for demands and responsibilities of the classroom. Effective classroom management and time management skills were modeled by the experienced teachers who supervised the apprentices during the four-year apprenticeship.
2. Both the apprentice and the sponsor can be confident that this is a good fit with long-term implications. Working for four years in the school system, the apprentice learns the culture, policies, and procedures in which he or she will work. There are no surprises as a new teacher relocates—often from out-of-state—and begins work in a new town with unfamiliar practices and no personal or professional relationships. The apprenticeship removes all of those variables that often lead to dissatisfaction and separation from the profession.
3. Teachers are educated and trained to the school system's specifications. The sponsoring school system can design the teacher preparation degree program to fit the needs of the school system, They can place emphasis on special education, active learning, dyslexia, cultural competence, or any number of aspects of the profession in which the school system needs additional expertise.
4. Hiring a diverse faculty is challenging. Using the apprentice model, apprentices can be selected with a preference or diverse candidates. The same is true for other hard-to-fill positions such as special education, sciences, mathematics, and language acquisition.

What is Being Asked?

Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) is ready to begin a pilot program cohort this fall 2020. They have committed nearly \$1,000,000 over the next five years. Matching state funds would make the second year's cohort possible and collect enough data on persistence and progress to continue the program. If FCPS's model proves successful, a fully developed program with success data would be scalable across the state without the need for each LEA to develop its own program. It directly addresses the Kirwin Commission's recommendations for improving teacher recruitment, training, and retention.

We request your assistance in making this happen with a favorable committee report on HB 1044.

Sincerely,

Delegate Kenneth P. Kerr
District 3B - Frederick County