

**Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 642
State Retirement and Pension System - COVID-19-Related Death Benefits – Clarification**

**Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
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The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 642, which extends line of duty death benefits to State Retirement members and their families when COVID-19 caused or contributed to the death. MSEA thanks the Joint Committee on Pensions for working to provide some recognition of the public servants who have passed due to the pandemic. This bill will help to provide some relief for families grieving the loss of their loved ones who lost their lives in the line of duty.

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).

Unfortunately, Maryland educators have seen death in the pandemic, and we have lost members in our ranks. These have been teachers, educational support professionals, and janitorial staff. While there is nothing we can do to bring those loved ones back, this bill would help to ensure that the families of those educators are cared for.

This bill would make Maryland second in the nation, after New York, to pass this type of legislation. If passed, Maryland would once again be a leader in supporting educators and their families. MSEA appreciates the Joint Committee's forward-thinking and championship on this issue.

For those reasons, MSEA urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 642.