



# Maryland Education Coalition



INSPIRES ACTION & POSITIVE CHANGE SO MARYLAND'S STUDENTS SUCCEED

Rick Tyler, Jr., Chair

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DATE: March 18, 2021

BILL: **HB0465**

COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and  
Environmental Affairs

TITLE: State Superintendent of Schools - Qualifications  
and Senate Confirmation  
SUPPORT with Amendments

The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) has been in existence for over 40 years and is made up of 20 statewide organizations & several individuals who represent parents, civil rights, & special population groups including lower income, special needs, limited English, Gifted & Talented and people of color. We advocate for adequate, equitable funding and systematic accountability for the estimated 900,000 public school students in Maryland's public schools regardless of their academic, cultural, economic, geographic, racial, or other demographic status.

MEC not only has extensive experience addressing and working with the Maryland General Assembly on a wide range of issues, but we also have decades of experience working with State Superintendents and the MSDE staff as leaders or members of MSDE stakeholder groups, councils, task forces and committees in an advisory capacity consistent with the federal ESSA requirement that ensures stakeholder participation in the decision-making process. That includes issues or actions items in front of the state board such as COMAR.

MEC joins the General Assembly in their concern with the leadership, organization, activities, and accountability of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and was among the first to publicly express concern and criticism due to the lack of state leadership, responsiveness and clear statewide guidance related to the pandemic, reopening plans and the additional services and support within their responsibilities. In recent years, the MSDE and State Board leadership appears to also relinquish some of their oversight and technical assistance responsibilities given to them by failing to consistently meet with or work with the General Assembly, local school systems and stakeholders on issues important to the quality of education of all students.

MEC seeks a reasonable balance in HB 465 by enabling the General Assembly to exercise some authority over the authority of the State Superintendent, but believe it is equally important ensure parents, teachers and other stakeholders are also part of the process to ensure systematic accountability for the performance of MSDE. MEC is also concerned that the list of required qualification may restrict eligibility of other highly qualified candidates. In addition, we would prefer a state superintendent that has successful experience working with diverse groups of learners.

MEC does not object to the list of qualifications in HB 465, but instead of requirements, we believe they should be preferences and that all leadership, management and education qualifications should be allowed to be considered. We are also aware of some examples across the nation of great state education leaders who would not meet each of the qualifications listed in HB 465.

Therefore, we support HB 465 with amendments and offer an amendment to change the word "MUST" to "SHOULD" and another REQUIRING STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS and

Respectfully yours,

Advocates for Children and Youth, American Civil Liberties Union of MD, Arts Education in Maryland Schools, Arts Every Day, Attendance Works, CASA, Decoding Dyslexia of MD, Disability Rights MD, League of Women Voters of MD, Let Them See Clearly, MSC-NAACP, Maryland PTA, Maryland Coalition for Community Schools, Maryland Coalition for Gifted & Talented Ed, Maryland Out of School Time Network, Public Justice Center, Maryland School Psychologists' Association, Parent Advocacy Consortium, Right to Read MD, School Social Workers of MD, Barbara Dezmon, Kalam Hettleman, David Hornbeck, Rick Tyler, Jr., Shamoyia Gardiner, Sharon Rubinstein