



**Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland House Senate,
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 6, 2024**

**Board of Education
of Howard County**

SB0937: FAVORABLE

Grow Your Own Educators Grant Program – Established

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **SB0937 Grow Your Own Educators Grant Program – Established Services** as an avenue to addressing current teacher shortages.

SB0937 establishes the Grow Your Own Educators Grant Program for local school systems that want to create collaboratives to support non-certificated education support professionals who are interested in pursuing a career in teaching and who pledge to be a full-time teacher in a high-needs school, grade level, or content areas which has a shortage of teachers as identified by the Maryland State Department of Education. In order to receive funds, collaboratives must include partnerships among: at least one school system; at least one local school system union; and at least one institution of higher education with an approved teacher preparation program. The collaborative must negotiate a plan to select the specific content area the grant will support, select a teacher preparation program, and select an individual to provide support and program guidance. The collaborative will also determine the billing agreement with the institution of higher education, and develop an outreach plan. Funding can be used for tuition, books, and fees for teacher candidates, stipends for mentor teachers required under the program, and costs associated with the administration of the program.

In addressing the decline in available teaching staff and the need for additional teachers to support the goals of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, SB0937 is in line with the Board's legislative priority to support efforts that would expand grow your own and similar measures that incentivize teachers to work locally in Maryland and/or Howard County. Internally, over the past several years, the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) has been aggressively targeting our current support staff to identify potential teaching candidates.

Through partnerships with Towson and Bowie State Universities, and supported by state-funded Teacher Collaborative Grants, HCPSS has had approximately 50 support staff who either earned their undergraduate or graduate degrees and teaching certificates. Through Maryland Leads, in order to diversify and increase the numbers of potential staff, Howard County is further enhancing and solidifying the Grow Your Own options being explored. Cohorts of Howard County students will participate in and complete the Teacher Academy Maryland and apprenticeships in HCPSS elementary schools as paraeducators. Additional funding to increase these pathways, whether in Howard County or through other school systems, would continue to grow the pool of available teacher candidates.

For these reasons, we urge a FAVORABLE report of SB0937 from this Committee.

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