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**BILL:** Senate Bill 937/House Bill 1157  
**TITLE:** Grow Your Own Educators Grant Program – Established  
**HEARING DATE:** March 6, 2024 / February 21, 2024  
**POSITION:** SUPPORT  
**COMMITTEE:** Senate Education, Energy and the Environment / House Ways and Means  
**CONTACT:** Mr. Steve Edwards, Deputy Communications Officer (301-766-8914)

The Washington County Board of Education supports Senate Bill 937, which would establish the Grow Your Own Educators Grant Program to provide grants to local school systems for employees who pledge to fulfill a certain service obligation as a full-time teacher in Maryland.

Attracting highly-qualified teachers is one of the most significant challenges facing Washington County Public Schools (WCPS) as well as school districts across Maryland and the nation. Providing funding to support a Grow Your Own Program, as outlined in the legislation, presents another unique opportunity to the state’s non-certificated education support professionals.

Consideration should also be given to expanding this opportunity to conditionally-certificated teachers as well. WCPS currently has 78 conditionally-certificated teachers, many of whom could benefit from a program such as the one proposed in this legislation. Both non-certificated education support professionals and conditionally-certificated teachers are already serving students across the state with many aspiring to become certificated teachers. While there are similar grant programs available, expanding the scope and providing non-certificated education support professionals and conditionally-certificated teachers with the opportunity to earn their teaching credentials at no cost to themselves while continuing to be paid and offered benefits represents a wise investment that will ultimately result in a larger pool of qualified, committed educators to serve in high-needs schools or teach content areas in which there is a shortage of teachers.

In Washington County, the number of new teachers hired over the past eight years has slowly but steadily increased from 125 in 2015-2016 to 239 in 2022-2023. While those figures are significant, the number of teaching positions that have remained vacant each year due to the teacher shortage is also notable.

WCPS has experienced success in developing teachers through the Maryland Accelerates Teacher-Leader Residency Program at Frostburg State University. In the 2022-2023 school year, 13 participants from the program were hired to teach in WCPS and there are another 9 who will likely seek employment with WCPS this year. With the expiration of the temporary federal funds that have helped to support this program on the horizon, additional financial support for grow your own programs needs to be established. As exemplified by Maryland Accelerates, these programs have proven to be a successful means of increasing the pool of qualified teachers and helping to ensure their success inside the classroom through a combination of education and mentorships with experienced educators.

Establishing a Grow Your Own Program, as outlined in the bill, is an attractive means of helping to address the teacher shortage in Maryland, promoting greater diversity within the teaching profession, and most importantly, ensuring students have highly qualified, committed teachers in their classrooms each day.

*The Washington County Board of Education respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 937.*

Thank you.

Cc: Washington County Board of Education Members  
Washington County Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly  
Dr. David T. Sovine, Superintendent  
Dr. Jennifer Webster, Associate Superintendent for Administration and Leadership  
Dr. Garry Willow, Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction  
Mr. Jeffrey Proulx, Chief Operating Officer  
Ms. Ilissa Ramm, Chief Legal Counsel  
Mr. John Woolums, Director of Governmental Relations, Maryland Association of Boards of Education  
Ms. Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland