



**March 3, 2024**

**The Honorable Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair  
The Honorable Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

**RE: Support for SB0937 Grow Your Own Educators Grant Program – Established with Amendment**

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, Committee Member, and Bill Sponsor,

The Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE), a coalition of education advocacy, civil rights, and community-based organizations committed to eliminating racial disparities in Maryland's education system, is pleased to submit favorable testimony in support of SB0937 with an amendment as introduced by Senator Augustine.

Grow Your Own is a teacher preparation strategy focused on developing teachers from the local community. This might mean offering paraprofessionals, teaching assistants, high school students and career changers an opportunity to become a certified educator and ensuring novice teachers have the supportive training they need to stay for the long term. Grow Your Own Programs have proven effective at targeting specific populations to the teaching profession and to retaining candidates. Ensuring that the State Department of Education has adequate funding for a GYO Educators Grant Program will allow for Maryland to grow and develop a strong teacher force here in Maryland with Marylanders.

We ask that SB0937 be amended to include conditionally certificated teachers. Currently the state of Maryland employs 5,304 teachers. Four of the biggest school districts are dependent upon the high number of candidates hired on a conditional certificate to fill teaching positions. However, there is no statewide structure in place to prepare, develop and retain the conditional teacher. For four years i contracted with one of these school districts to create a system of guidance, to provide critical and timely information along with transparency, to enroll them in a Maryland Approved Teacher Preparation Program for teacher candidates hired on a conditional certificate. Over these, i found that too often conditionally certificated teachers did not understand the immense responsibility in

becoming a professionally certified educator (i.e. the time commitment, returning to college, the high cost of returning to school) financially, emotionally, mentally, and physically.

Including conditional teachers will increase the number of conditional teachers who realize professional certification and eliminate the financial burden faced by many. It will also be another measure to ensure that Maryland teachers are receiving all the preparation they should have as educators. And will retain educators. These educators are committed to profession despite the challenges. **We urge you to support and amend SB0937 to include conditional certificated teachers.**

peace and truth,  
sharlimar douglass  
Chair

The Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE)