



PSSAM
Public School Superintendents' Association
OF MARYLAND

Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director
1217 S. Potomac Street
Baltimore, MD 21224
410-935-7281
marypat.fannon@pssam.org

BILL: SB 937
TITLE: Grow Your Own Educators Grant Program - Established
DATE: March 6, 2024
POSITION: Favorable
COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four Maryland local school superintendents, **supports** Senate Bill 937.

This bill establishes 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 the State; requiring the State Department of Education to administer the Program and to take certain actions to develop and implement the Program; establishing the eligibility for certain teacher candidates in the Program and requiring teacher candidates to be paid a certain rate and offered certain benefits under the Program; etc.

Local superintendents support the General Assembly's assistance and efforts to address the critical shortages of qualified teachers and school personnel. The teacher shortage in Maryland is well-documented and dire. According to the MSDE 2022-2023 First Day of School Vacancy Data Collection, there were 2,572 total vacancies, with the highest number in special education (581); these vacancies vary significantly across LEAs due to local recruitment and retention efforts. Additionally, enrollment in teacher preparation programs has increased since 2017 but is still 2,300 enrollees short of the 2012 levels (Source: Title II Annual Teacher Preparation State Report). More alarmingly, teacher attrition has increased from 9.1% in 2014 to 11.2% in 2023, representing over 7,000 educators who did not return to teaching in the 22/23 school year. Lastly, the issuance of conditionally certificated teachers has increased by 136% over the last five years (MSDE - Updates on the Maryland Educator Workforce; 9-12-23 before the Senate Ways and Means Committee).

Currently, twenty-three local school systems are administering very successful Grow Your Own programs with the potential to yield more than 300 teachers, 100 new paraprofessionals, and support more than 400 conditionally certificate teachers to pass license exams. PSSAM believes SB 937's grant program for non-certificated personnel to attend school to gain the credentials to become certificated teachers in teacher shortage areas. This program will aid existing efforts to strengthen the teacher pipeline and serve as a key resource for recruiting and supporting a more diverse workforce. This legislation will also help support and highlight the benefits of teaching in the context of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future that promises increased starting salaries, clear pathways for upward mobility, and leadership growth.

For these reasons, PSSAM **supports** Senate Bill 937 and requests a **favorable** report.