

UP

the STREET

MSEA LEGISLATIVE UPDATES



February 20, 2015

Issue 92

THE WEEK THAT WAS IN ANNAPOLIS

• Charter School Debate Heating Up

Next week, the House Ways and Means Committee will hold a hearing on [HB 486](#), Governor Hogan's proposal to lower standards and accountability in an effort to expand charter schools in Maryland. MSEA is working to defeat this specific charter proposal and issued a [policy paper](#) to further review our priorities with the issue and the specific concerns in Governor Hogan's approach. The Senate hearing for the charter school crossfile, [SB 595](#), is scheduled for March 4 with the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee.

Governor Hogan visited a Baltimore City charter school this week to amplify his push for expansion. The governor was joined by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. While it is unclear that either Hogan or Duncan understand the provisions in the administration's [Public Charter School Expansion and Improvement Act of 2015](#), they both blindly push for charter school expansion. While we should celebrate the high quality public charter schools we have in our state, the governor and other charter advocates fail to understand that the proposed changes to our charter school law undermine the very provisions that have created great charter schools in Maryland. Our charter school law is worth celebrating because of its high standards, rather than high numbers of charter schools. Maryland's law can be judged on the quality of schools, the positive learning environments for students, and the supportive working conditions for educators. Our law works and if there are tweaks to make it better, we will be ready to support them. But we must not let uninformed rhetoric replace accountability and results.

• Testing Moratorium Introduced

Thanks to Senator J.B. Jennings (R, District 7, Baltimore and Harford Counties) and Delegate Haven Shoemaker (R, District 5, Carroll County) for introducing legislation to impose a testing moratorium on all state standardized tests from grades PreK-2. To date, [SB 699](#) and [HB 1137](#) will place a moratorium on the administration of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA), as that is the only current state standardized test in this early grade span. But, the moratorium would prohibit any new tests in PreK, first, and second grade, and would require a halt to the statewide KRA. The moratorium would give time for the Maryland State Department of Education to modify the KRA to address major issues about the assessment and its implementation are addressed. The Department would still be allowed to pilot the KRA in some schools and with some students, but must also do a complete analysis about the value, appropriateness, and efficiency of the KRA and other early grade tests and assessments.

MSEA first [called for the suspension of the KRA](#) in December 2014 after hearing from hundreds of kindergarten teachers on the subject. Kindergarten teachers flagged numerous problems with the KRA, including the significant loss of instructional time, the test's developmental appropriateness, inadequate technology support, and the test's inability to inform and improve instruction for students. Among the report's findings:

- 91% of kindergarten teachers in the survey do not believe that the KRA will help improve instruction.
- 78.4% reported technology problems with the administration of the KRA.
- 51% reported that no or minimal accommodations were made for students with Individualized Education Programs and English Language Learners.

Read [MSEA's full report and recommendations here](#).

TIME TO TAKE ACTION

A lot of issues are percolating at the state and federal level and are in need of immediate action. Learn more and take action using the information and links below:

- Federal: ESEA Reauthorization**
 Visit getESEAright.com or call NEA's ESEA Hotline at 1-866-331-7233 to push Congress to reauthorize ESEA to include opportunity for all students and a commitment to reducing federally mandated standardized testing to provide students more time to learn.
- State Budget Battle**
 Visit DontShortchangeMaryland.com and call MSEA's Legislative Hotline at 1-888-520-MSEA (6732) to learn about the proposed reductions in state aid in Governor Hogan's FY16 education budget and to push legislators to restore full funding of the Thornton formula, per pupil spending, Net Taxable Income, and the Geographic Cost of Education Index.
- Time to Learn and Time to Teach**
[Click here to email your legislators](#) and support passage of [HB 452/SB 497](#): Commission to Review Maryland's Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools. The purpose of the commission is to examine the use, purpose, amount, time, and cost of state and local assessments and make recommendations on how to eliminate redundant testing and increase the amount of time students have to learn and teachers have to teach.
- Protecting Maryland's Charter School Law**
 MSEA issued a [policy paper](#) this week to review key principles of the charter school discussion and how Governor Hogan's proposal undermines the quality, accountability, and equity of our current charter school law. [Email your legislators](#) and encourage them to oppose [HB 486](#) and [SB 595](#).
- Rejecting BOAST and Vouchers**
 We can also [email legislators](#) to oppose [HB 487](#) and [SB 405](#), the governor's proposal to allocate public dollars to private and parochial schools. The governor's bill redirects \$5 million in the first year, \$10 million in the second, and \$15 million in the third and continue at \$15 million annually. MSEA issued a [policy paper](#) on this topic as well, underscoring the need to reject this tax credit and other voucher schemes that would siphon dollars from our already underfunded public schools.

THE WEEK AHEAD

Key bill hearings are taking place next week, including the following on Thursday in the House Ways and Means Committee:

- [HB 452](#): Commission to Review Maryland's Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools. **MSEA supports.**
- [HB 389](#): Education - Beginning of School Year - After Labor Day. **MSEA opposes.**
- [HB 487](#): Maryland Education Credit (BOAST). **MSEA opposes.**
- [HB 486](#): Public Charter School Expansion and Improvement Act of 2015. **MSEA opposes.**

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