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MSEA LEGISLATIVE UPDATES



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Issue 94

THE WEEK THAT WAS IN ANNAPOLIS

- **Time to Learn and Time to Teach**

The Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee held public hearings on both of MSEA's priority bills to advance our "Time to Learn and Time to Teach" agenda. [Senate Bill 497, Commission to Review Maryland's Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools](#), and [SB 699, Primary Education - State Standardized Assessments - Moratorium](#), were the bills discussed in committee. Senator Paul Pinsky (D - District 22, Prince George's County) is the lead sponsor for SB 497. He noted the importance of creating this testing commission so we get good data to create actionable recommendations that will prompt the State Board and all 24 local boards of education to respond and engage in a healthy discussion about minimizing testing redundancy and maximizing tests that actually help teachers to improve their instruction. Senator J.B. Jennings (R - District 7, Baltimore and Harford Counties) is the Senate Minority Leader and lead sponsor on the testing moratorium for grades PreK – 2. This moratorium immediately affects the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) and forces MSDE to fix the myriad issues with the implementation of the KRA before it can be deployed in every kindergarten class in the state again.

The Maryland State Department of Education offered informational testimony for SB 497, the testing commission bill, highlighting ongoing work the department is doing to assess testing in the state. The Maryland Association of Boards of Education, Maryland Family Network, and Maryland Business Roundtable opposed SB 699, the testing moratorium, citing the importance of data in measuring the success of pre-kindergarten programs. MSEA hopes to work with any opponents of the bill to ensure that meaningful data is being collected and is available, not just for state or national rankings, but for actual parent and teacher review and use.

Bill sponsors from the House and Senate joined with MSEA President Betty Weller and two teachers at a [press conference earlier in the day](#) to highlight the importance of this "Time to Learn" agenda. This push prompted [reporters to ask Governor Hogan](#) about testing levels in schools today. And while the governor did not endorse the specific bills, he did agree that students are over-tested and that "kids aren't really getting a good education that way."

The General Assembly will have their say on these bills, and they need to hear from educators, parents, students, and other concerned about over-testing in our schools today. [Email your legislators and ask them to support legislation that will help create Time to Learn and Time to Teach.](#)

- **To PARCC or Not to PARCC**

On Monday, Delegate David Vogt (R - District 4, Frederick and Carroll Counties) [called on Governor Hogan](#) to use his executive authority to withdraw Maryland from the PARCC consortium. When Maryland signed a memorandum of understanding with the consortium, it included an opt-out provision when there is a change in governors. Governor Hogan has until the end of May to decide if he will exercise this authority. Such a move would not impact the administration of PARCC this year, nor would it remove the federal obligation for annual testing. MSEA is committed to working with Governor Hogan and the General Assembly to better understand the merits of retaining or withdrawing from PARCC. We continue to insist that any assessment that we use in Maryland effectively informs instruction, is well aligned with state standards, has a reasonable price tag, and minimizes the impact on instructional time.

- **Senate Hearing on Charter School Expansion**

Governor Hogan's dangerous proposal to lower standards and accountability in the name of charter school expansion was part of a five-hour hearing in the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee. [Senate bill 595, Public Charter School Expansion and Improvement Act of 2015](#), was put through the legislative ringer for the second week in a row. Proponents continued to fail to explain what is broken in our current law that is supporting high-performing public charter schools that work for Maryland. MSEA strongly opposed SB 595. We support public charter schools that are meeting the needs of students and communities and will work with the administration and the General Assembly to ensure that if there are any changes to our law, they strengthen provisions of quality, accountability, and equity, rather than undermine them as Governor Hogan's bill would do. The House version of this bill was heard last week. [Email your legislators and encourage them to oppose HB 486 and SB 595.](#)

- **News and Notes**

- *Senator Mikulski to Retire*

U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski is the longest-serving woman in the history of Congress, and when her fifth term ends, she will retire. The retirement will create a lot of political intrigue for an open seat in 2016. But first and foremost, Senator Mikulski is deserving of praise for shaping a generation of women in politics in Maryland and across the country. Mikulski called herself "a social worker with power," relying on her professional background to inform her tireless advocacy for families, women, and children in the name of fairness, opportunity, and equality. While short in stature, nobody stands taller or offers a stronger voice than Senator Mikulski. Her brand of leadership will be missed in Baltimore, in Maryland, in the Congress, and across the country.

- *Chris Van Hollen Will; Martin O'Malley Will Not; and Lots of Other Candidate Jockeying*

While some would-be candidates have been publicly flirting with a run for Senator Mikulski's open seat, Congressman Chris Van Hollen formally [announced his U.S. Senate campaign](#) on Wednesday. A day earlier, former Governor Martin O'Malley surprised some by [announcing he would not seek](#) the open seat. Other possible Democrats considering a run for the Senate seat include U.S. Representatives Elijah Cummings, John Delaney, Donna Edwards, Dutch Ruppersberger, and John Sarbanes, U.S. Labor Secretary Tom Perez, Comptroller Peter Franchot, Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, former Lt. Governors Anthony Brown and Kathleen Kennedy-Townsend, recent 2014 candidates Doug Gansler and Heather Mizeur, and former TV-anchor and Marriott executive Kathleen Matthews. Frequently mentioned Republican candidates include Dan Bongino, former Governor Bob Ehrlich, and Congressman Andy Harris. If any of the members of Congress file for the Senate seat, it will set off a domino effect of many of these same individuals and several state legislators considering a run for an open U.S. House seat. Stay tuned!

- *MSEA Legislative Townhall Meetings*

MSEA President Betty Weller and Vice President Cheryl Bost continue legislative townhall meetings with educators, community partners, and other interested parties around the state. This is your chance to talk about critical funding and testing issues and find out how you can take action. [Find the townhall meeting nearest you and RSVP today!](#)

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