

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2015 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**

Senate Bill 635 (Washington County Senators)  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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**Washington County - Board of Education - Alternative Teacher Certification Program**

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This bill authorizes the Washington County Board of Education to establish an alternative teacher certification program. Between May 1 and September 1 of a given year, the Washington County Board of Education may (1) declare a critical teacher shortage and (2) certify a candidate, in accordance with the alternative teacher program to fill a critical teacher shortage vacancy in specified areas. If a position that has been filled under the alternative teacher certification program becomes vacant during the school year, the position may be filled by (1) a teacher who has an educator certificate issued by the State Superintendent of Schools or (2) a teacher who has been certified in accordance with the alternative teacher certification program in Washington County. Unless the teacher completes a certification track approved by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), a teacher hired to fill a critical teacher shortage vacancy is not eligible for an educator certificate issued by the State Superintendent of Schools.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2015.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** MSDE can approve the creation of an alternative teacher education program as allowed under current law and the Maryland Code of Regulations (COMAR) by the Washington County Board of Education using existing resources. Public four-year institutions of higher education or Baltimore City Community College may choose to partner with Washington County Board of Education to create an alternative certification program.

**Local Effect:** Authorizing the Washington County Board of Education to establish an alternative teacher certification program does not require additional expenditures. However, if the board decides to establish a program additional expenditures will be

required. A local community college may choose to partner with Washington County Board of Education to create an alternative certification program.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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## **Analysis**

**Bill Summary:** Specifically, the Washington County Board of Education may certify a candidate to fill a critical teacher shortage vacancy in the following areas:

- middle school education (grades 4-9);
- general secondary content areas (grades 7-12);
- professional and technical education (grades 7-12);
- specialty areas (prekindergarten – grade 12);
- specialized professional areas (grades 7-12);
- world languages (prekindergarten – grade 12); and
- school counselors.

**Current Law:** Teachers, specialists, and administrators in Maryland public schools and in approved schools operated by State agencies must hold a valid certificate appropriate to the field of employment.

According to COMAR, certification may be obtained in one of the following ways:

- completing a college or university State-approved educator preparation program;
- holding a valid, out-of-state professional certificate and submitting verification of 27 months of full-time satisfactory professional experience;
- meeting transcript analysis requirements; or
- completing a Resident Teacher Certification (RTC) program.

RTC is Maryland's alternative route to teacher certification in Maryland. Since January 2007, all providers who train teachers to receive an RTC must be approved by MSDE and must be designated to meet the individual needs of the participating local school system. An RTC applicant must (1) have a bachelor's degree with a concentration in an area appropriate for the teaching assignment; (2) have earned grades of B or better in the major area of study; (3) present qualifying scores on teacher certification tests; and (4) have verification by the local superintendent of schools that the applicant completed a minimum of 90 clock hours of study in a resident teacher program developed according to MSDE guidelines. Additional clock hours of study, the completion of a residency with supervision

by a supervising teacher or mentor, and satisfactory teaching performance qualify a resident teacher for a standard professional certificate. An applicant who holds an RTC must be eligible for a standard professional certificate upon receipt by the MSDE of all of the following items: (1) completion of an approved alternative program; (2) a qualifying score on the applicable MSDE-approved pedagogy test; and (3) satisfactory teaching performance during the residency period.

In addition, a local school system may request that MSDE grant an individual a Conditional Teacher Certificate if the school system is unable to fill a position with a qualified person who holds a professional certification. To be issued a Conditional Teacher Certificate, an applicant hired by a local school system, must hold a bachelor's or higher degree from an institution of higher education but does not need to meet the requirements for a professional certificate. An applicant in a career and technology education area that does not require a bachelor's degree may be issued a Conditional Teacher Nondegree Certificate without a bachelor's degree.

Regular professional certificates are valid for five years, while RTC and Conditional Teacher Certificates are only valid for two years. An RTC cannot be renewed. A Conditional Teacher Certificate may be reviewed once (for two years) if the applicant has met specified requirements.

In addition, the State Superintendent of Schools has the authority to waive the specific requirements for a certificate (except for teacher certification tests) in an individual case if the State Superintendent determines that the applicant's preparation and/or experience are adequate to justify a waiver.

An "alternative teacher preparation program" is defined as a program established by a local board of education and approved by the State Superintendent of Schools.

**Background:** Alternative preparation programs differ from traditional programs in that alternative preparation leads to teacher certification, but not necessarily to a degree. Alternative preparation programs allow an individual to begin teaching and receiving a salary earlier in a program, and they usually cost much less than traditional routes. However, given the modified timeframe, alternative preparation programs are considered intensive and very challenging. One of the most well-known alternative programs is Teach for America.

MSDE has implemented several options for certifying potential teachers who are career changers since 2005, including the Maryland Approved Alternative Preparation Program (MAAPP) under the RTC program described under COMAR. MAAPP's purpose is to assist local school systems to fill hard-to-staff positions within its schools.

As of April 2014, Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties and Baltimore City had active MAAPPs. Washington County does not have any. Most programs are in partnership with two-year or four-year colleges or other private education providers. Under MAAPP, local school systems produce teachers in specified classification areas.

As of October 2014, there were approximately 1,550 public school teachers in Washington County. Of those teachers, 0.4% have a doctorate degree, 1.7% have a master's degree plus 30 hours, 46.5% have a master's degree, 24.6% have a bachelor's degree plus 30 hours, 26.3% have a bachelor's degree, 0.1% have between two and three years of college, and 0.3% have a high school degree or fewer than two years of college. The average teacher salary for Washington County during this period was \$60,301 per year.

**State Fiscal Effect:** MSDE currently approves alternative teacher certification programs; thus, MSDE can approve a program established by Washington County using existing resources.

**Local Expenditures:** Authorizing the Washington County Board of Education to establish an alternative teacher certification program does not require additional expenditures. However, if the board decides to establish a program additional expenditures will be required. There is no data readily available on the cost of establishing an alternative teacher certification program; thus, it is unknown how much such a program will cost.

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### Additional Information

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** HB 790 (Washington County Delegation) - Ways and Means.

**Information Source(s):** Washington County, Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 9, 2015  
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