

Legislative Report for CRSPA- February 1, 2023

With the flip of a calendar page to January 2023, lots of things began happening in Annapolis. We have a new governor, Lt. governor, attorney general, and comptroller. 50 new legislators in the General Assembly joined the new leadership and along with these changes came new committee memberships and committee chairmen and a hope that *some MRSPA priorities will see different outcomes this year.*

MRSPA's Priorities for 2023 now have rationale listed to guide the largest committee in MRSPA to complete their charge to inform and monitor legislation which impacts retired educators as well as schools and older persons in general. The committee has recently added curriculum as a part of their education priorities because they feel very strongly that legislation should not dictate that which the state Board of Education or local boards should be responsible for. Some topics expected to come up this legislative session in Maryland's General Assembly include: cannabis, crime, education (including the Blueprint), guns, abortion, vacancies in state offices and agencies, and the budget surplus which is probably due to COVID funding from the federal government.

The MRSPA website has a menu across the top which includes legislation. That drop down button contains tools for direct links to the Maryland General Assembly meetings and committee membership along with contact information for sponsors in the midst of other information. Each year, the Legislative Aide for MRSPA monitors all filed bills and brings possible bills of interest to the committee which meets bi-weekly during the Legislative Session. The committee monitors not only our pension, which is a big part of their charge, but also other relevant issues that impact us. Bills are given a choice of **Support**, **Oppose**, **No Positon**, or **Monitor**. If a bill is recommended with a **support** or **oppose** vote, a letter is written on MRSPA stationery and then is presented to legislators, placed in a binder to be referenced in preparation and before the hearing. If needed, the committee will also provide testimony. After each bi-weekly meeting, a legislative update is posted on the website so that anyone can monitor bills that are being brought up.

Another objective of the Legislative Committee is to have an annual workshop for all the counties in Maryland. This year's MRSPA Legislative Workshop was held on Tuesday, January 31st with an agenda that included representatives from AARP MD

and NRTA (AARP's Educator Community). MRSPA works collaboratively with them due to common legislative priorities they all share that enrich the quality of life of older citizens including such issues as affordability of prescription drugs, out of pocket medical costs, broadband issues/telehealth technology, nursing homes and long term care, and cognitive and behavioral health (the new "buzz term" for mental health). Other agenda items on this year's agenda included an update from the State Retirement and Pension System by the Executive Director. He reported that the fund is doing well despite recent losses in the market due to the "good year experiences from a couple of years ago" and the "asset smooth" strategy implemented to try to avoid increased employer contributions. He also reported that they hope to be working on providing better member services to assist those either retiring or retired. There is no bill currently but he spoke about a possible retirement benefits study and also changing the vesting period which currently is 10 years. The woman who was bringing a Maryland Budget Overview lost connection toward the beginning of her presentation and hopefully we will receive information from her at a later date. Aruna Miller, Maryland's new Lt. Governor, brought greetings from the new administration to start the workshop and shared about her first public school experience when she was a 7 year old coming from India.

There are a few bills that the MSRPA Legislative Committee has already taken positions on including 3 bills dealing with curriculum, 2 concerning election and election law, 988, mental health, and income tax credits/modifications. These bills are in various stages including **Hearing**, **1st Reading**, and **2nd Reading**. You can access the MRSPA website for the current status/updates on these and all bills as well as read the actual wording of bills being presented and their sponsor's contact information should you want to monitor issues or have input as an individual.

Here is the link: <https://www.mrspa.org/legislative-updates>