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Up the Street: MSEA Legislative Updates

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THE WEEK THAT WAS IN ANNAPOLIS

- **Educators, Parents Testify in Favor of State Testing Limit**

On Thursday, five educators—including bill sponsor Del. [Eric Luedtke](#) (D, District 14, Montgomery)—testified before the [House Ways and Means Committee](#) in favor of legislation to establish a 2% cap on the amount of instruction time that can be used for federal, state, or local mandated tests ([HB 141/ SB 407](#)). MSEA members Casey Day-Kells (elementary school teacher in Frederick), Celia Burton (testing coordinator in Prince George's), and Sarah Neubold (art teacher and content specialist in Montgomery) joined MSEA President Betty Weller in explaining how over-testing negatively affects our students. Maryland PTA President Elizabeth Ysla Leight also testified, telling legislators that parents strongly support the testing cap.

The Senate version of the bill will receive a hearing in the [Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee](#) on Wednesday March 2. We need your help keeping up the momentum and making sure legislators know why our students need less testing now! Please [send an email today by clicking here](#) and writing your own message about the importance of reducing time on testing. You can also contact your legislators by phone. Use MSEA's Legislative Hotline to get connected to the legislative switchboard in order to reach your senator and delegates. Call 888-520-MSEA (6732).

- **State Testing Commission Meets Again**

On Monday, the state Commission on Assessments met for the fourth time to discuss reforms to reduce standardized testing in Maryland's schools. They heard feedback from parents, Baltimore teachers, superintendents, and school board representatives, and discussed new analysis of collected testing data. They also announced that the commission will break into four groups—administrative, elementary-level testing, secondary-level testing, and special services—to begin making preliminary recommendations.

[MSEA testified before the commission](#) during their meeting last month, and will continue to bring educators' perspectives into their deliberations. [MarylandReporter.com](#) continues to follow the commission's work and [you can read about their Monday meeting here](#).

- **MSEA Joins Coalition Partners to Push for Expansion of Community Schools**
Del. **Mary Washington** (D, District 43, Baltimore City) was joined by MSEA and other coalition partners this week to announce new legislation to create a state funding program for community schools—an exciting and successful school strategy designed to bring community resources into the school building to help address concentrated poverty. **The Maryland Community School Strategy for Excellence in Public Education Act (HB 1139)** would allocate \$25,000 to designated community schools for planning and then increase state education aid to fund the community services identified in community school plans. If passed, this would result in significant new resources to help educators tackle the growing number of students living in poverty and attending Maryland’s public schools. WBAL covered the event and **you can watch their story here**.

Kerrin Torres, a Montgomery County ESOL teacher, represented MSEA at the event and spoke to the success of her school’s community partnership through Montgomery County Public Schools’ **Linkages to Learning** program. You can find out more about community schools from **MSEA’s white paper**.

- **News and Notes**

- *Maryland General Assembly Overrides Sixth Gov. Hogan Veto*
The General Assembly made **national news** on Tuesday after successfully overriding Gov. Hogan’s veto of legislation to give ex-felons on parole the right to vote after being released from prison. The override returns the right to vote to **more than 40,000 previously disenfranchised Marylanders**—and deals a blow to Gov. Hogan as each of his 2015 vetoes have now been overridden.
- *Maryland Democrats Introduce Comprehensive Gun Violence Prevention Package*
Congress may be gridlocked, but legislative leaders in Maryland teamed up with Attorney General **Brian Frosh** to introduce a package of bills aimed at preventing gun violence. **Legislation includes:** banning people on the Terrorist Watch List from purchasing guns, ensuring convicted domestic abusers no longer own guns, and prohibiting gun possession on college campuses.
- *Gov. Hogan Submits First Two FY2017 Supplemental Budgets*
Gov. Hogan delivered on two priorities for legislative leaders this week, submitting supplemental budgets for the **demolition of vacant buildings in Baltimore City** and the **Prince George’s Regional Hospital System**. Democrats had previously criticized the governor for failing to include those items in his initial budget proposal. Gov. Hogan’s budget already fully funds public school funding—as is required of him by law.

CAMPAIGN 2016 (and 2018)

- **Educators Back Jamie Raskin for Congress**
On Thursday, the National Education Association’s political action committee, the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education, endorsed State Sen. **Jamie Raskin** (D, District 20, Montgomery) for Maryland’s 8th Congressional District. NEA President Lily Eskelsen García praised Raskin’s “impressive record of producing breakthrough policy results” in a released statement and called him “a true progressive leader with impressive experience who realizes the importance of public education in the lives of working families.” You can

[read about the endorsement in *The Baltimore Sun*.](#)

Raskin has made public school funding and reducing standardized testing—the two biggest K-12 concerns for both educators and the general public in Maryland—essential priorities in his campaign for Congress and throughout his time in the Maryland General Assembly. To find out more about Raskin and to sign up to volunteer on his campaign, [visit his website here](#).

- **Educators for Hillary**

The Democratic primary now moves to Nevada and South Carolina and educators are starting to really scale up their efforts to make Hillary Clinton the next president of the United States. But we need your help. Sign up to be an Educator for Hillary at www.strongpublicschools.org. There, you can create an activist account, link with friends, and help reach caucus goers and primary voters across the country to help elect a pro-public education champion.

- **Gov. Hogan Raises \$1.7 Million For Re-Election Campaign**

While Gov. Hogan was cutting public education funding last year, he was also busy holding fundraisers with lobbyists and corporate donors to bring in \$1.7 million to his campaign coffers. **Just 16% of his donations came in at \$250 or less**, with big business and special interests making up the rest. He now has \$2 million cash on hand as he gears up for re-election in 2018. You can [help MSEA make sure that pro-public education candidates](#) win in 2016 and 2018 by giving to the MSEA Fund for Children and Public Education.

For a pdf version of this edition of *Up the Street*, [click here](#).

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