Written Testimony for the Record to the
Maryland House of Delegates
Ways and Means Committee
Education – Public Schools – Financial Literacy Curriculum and Graduation Requirement
(HB 508)

February 14, 2020

SUPPORTS WITH AMENDMENT

Maryland PTA is the state’s oldest and largest child advocacy organization that serves as a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education. We represent thousands of volunteer members in 900 public schools and we are devoted to the educational success of children and family engagement in Maryland. For 105 years, our mission has been to make every child’s potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

Maryland PTA submits this testimony in support of House Bill 508 (“HB 508”) that would require:

- the State Board of Education to develop curriculum content for a half-semester-long course in financial literacy
- each county board of education to implement the financial literacy curriculum content in every public high school, and
- students to complete a course in financial literacy to graduate from a public high school.

Additionally, Maryland PTA suggests one amendment to HB 508.

According to a 2017 Career Builder survey, approximately 78% of United States workers live paycheck-to-paycheck to make ends meet. This includes many who make more than $100,000 a year. More than 1 in 4 workers do not set aside any savings on a monthly basis, and nearly 3 in 4 workers say they are in debt; half of the workers surveyed think they will always be in debt. More than half of minimum wage earners say they have to work more than one job to make ends meet.

Experian reports Generation Z is very curious about personal finances, and 3 out of 4 Generation Z consumers think high schools should teach financial classes. Many young adults in the generation report not being completely comfortable with the concepts of debt and credit. According to a recent survey conducted by Experian, only 19% of Generation Z consumers reported feeling they had a solid understanding of credit.

A lack of financial literacy contributes to the cycle of poverty. Maryland PTA believes HB 508 would lead to more fiscal responsibility and help break the cycle. Financial management is important to
reducing poverty. Teaching our children how to make sound financial decisions will improve the likelihood of their financial success.

We understand, however, that there are students with special needs who may not be able to understand this information. Accordingly, we suggest permitting children with learning disabilities that would prevent the successful completion of a financial literacy course to be exempted from the graduation requirement. Parents/guardians of children with special needs could be permitted to opt-out of the requirement pursuant to an Individualized Education Program (IEP) plan.

For reasons above, Maryland PTA supports HB 508, and recommends a favorable report with the amendment noted.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Edna Harvin Battle
President