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BILL: House Bill 878
TITLE: Public Charter School Act of 2017
DATE: February 28, 2017
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
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House Bill 878 establishes the Maryland Public Charter School Authority as a public chartering authority under the Maryland Public Charter School Program; specifies that employees of a public charter school authorized by the Authority are not public school employees, are exempt from State teacher certification requirements, and may refuse to join employee organizations; and requires the Authority to adopt specified policies regarding teacher induction, preparation, and development.

PSSAM **opposes** House Bill 878. Local superintendents believe that this bill is not needed and diminishes the authority of local superintendents and boards of education.

Local superintendents strongly believe in local autonomy and authority over our public schools. We have also been supportive of charter schools since the Public Charter School Act of 2003. This Act legislates that charter schools must comply with provisions of the law and regulations governing other public schools unless waivers are granted by the State Board. The Public Charter School Improvement Act of 2015 provided for major revisions to local and State Board chartering authority.

House Bill 878 creates an additional state bureaucracy known as the “Maryland Public School Chartering Authority.” For example, this bill transfers authority from the State Board to the new state bureaucracy in areas such as curriculum and teacher quality. It also gives authority for the oversight of a charter school to the new state bureaucracy. And, it exempts people employed by a charter school from teaching certification requirements. The bill essentially undermines the authority of local boards of education to establish and maintain a uniform system.

More than 50 charter schools have been approved by local boards of education and are operating in several local school systems. PSSAM believes that local board authority is critical and the definitive reason that Maryland’s charter schools have not experienced the financial or academic failures that have occurred in charter schools across the nation.

For the reasons stated above, PSSAM **opposes** House Bill 878.