



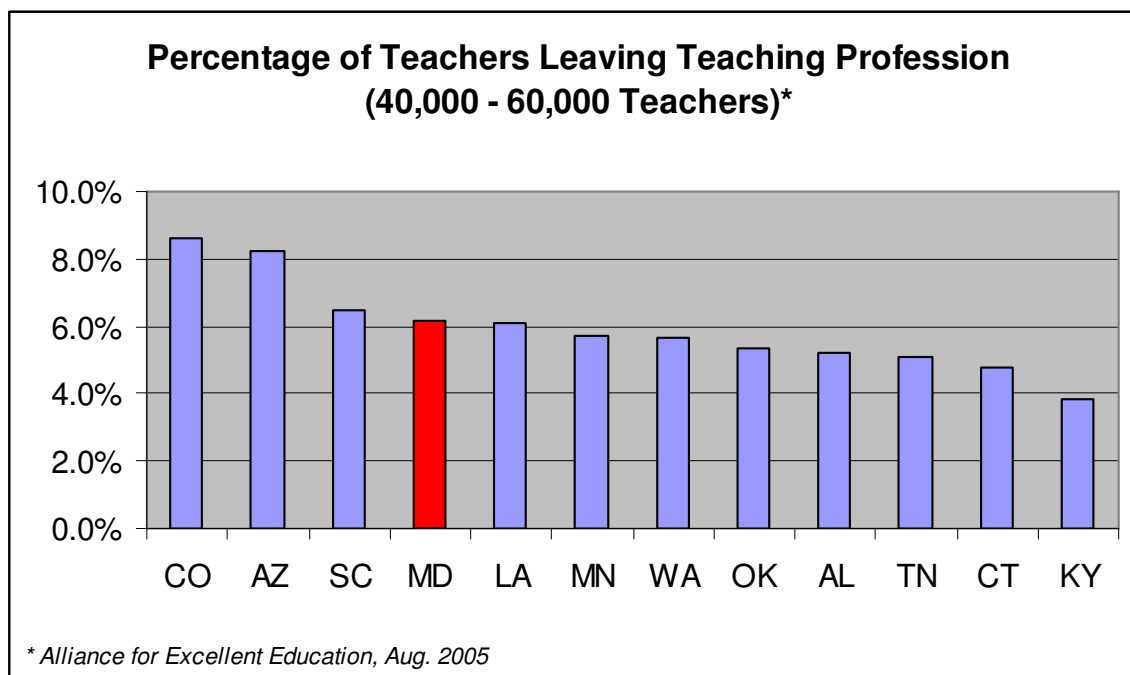
## NEW IDEAS TO IMPROVE TEACHER WORKING CONDITIONS

*“Teacher working conditions are student learning conditions”*  
-Governor Mike Easley, North Carolina

### Introduction

Martin O’Malley and Anthony Brown understand that the delivery of a sound educational program depends heavily on teachers who are allowed to focus their energy on one thing: teaching. Ironically, policy makers and administrators can lose sight of what is important by focusing solely on education regulations and standards without listening to the one audience that will be most directly impacted—our teachers.

Providing a safe and professional environment for teachers is critical in the effort to raise student achievement. It is no secret that teachers who remain in the profession are those who work in collegial school settings with strong leadership that allows them to fully utilize their skills. By contrast, those teachers who are placed in less supportive environments tend to switch assignments, or leave the profession entirely. According to the Maryland Governor’s Commission on Quality Education, “in Maryland, only 60 out of 100 people who prepare to be teachers actually go on to teach. Of those 60, only 32 remain in the profession after five years.”



Other states across the country have launched efforts to incorporate actual teacher survey data in formulating policies that affect the state, regional, and local school levels. Policy makers in South Carolina, Ohio, and Nevada take a teacher-centered approach by using comprehensive teacher survey data to shape policies that have an immediate impact on the quality of the workplace. Governor Mark Easley of North Carolina has taken this customer-based approach one step further by implementing a Teacher Working Conditions (TWC) survey as a permanently funded initiative of his state's budget. In North Carolina, the data clearly demonstrate direct links between working conditions of teachers and student achievement. (See <http://www.northcarolinatwc.org/> for additional information about North Carolina's effort.)

### **Existing Efforts Lagging**

Today, states across the country face an ever-increasing pressure to deliver highly quality teachers to the classroom. The challenge is presented on both sides of the same coin: recruit and train outstanding new teachers AND retain the best teachers. Surprisingly, few states have focused their attention on keeping qualified teachers in the classroom in the first place. Here in Maryland, our leaders have chosen to conduct year-long studies to identify ways to improve the educational system without implementing real strategies that can have a significant impact on both attracting and retaining the best teachers.

In fact, the current administration has taken action against efforts to identify ways to improve working conditions for teachers. In 2004, legislation to create a task force to study teacher working conditions was created. It passed both houses of the General Assembly, but was vetoed by the governor.

Maryland can and must do better.

### **Improving Teacher Working Conditions**

The O'Malley-Brown administration will move aggressively to attract and retain our best teachers by making the Maryland State government responsive to the direct needs of our schools, drawing from actual survey data submitted by teachers. Through its own TWC survey, our State will be able to identify areas of need quickly, and do so without any political bias or expensive year-long studies. But this represents only the beginning: Martin O'Malley and Anthony Brown will use teacher survey data to direct resources where they are needed the most, which will lead to the results that Maryland citizens expect and deserve. This three point initiative involves:

***Making the Teacher Working Conditions Survey a Part of the State Budget.*** By considering our teachers as true professionals, the O'Malley-Brown administration will propose to the General Assembly a bill to seek teachers' direct input every two years on issues pertaining to the quality of school leadership, professional development, administrative support, and facility conditions.

***Enacting Immediate Policies to Address Survey Results.*** Martin O'Malley and Anthony Brown will draw upon Mayor O'Malley's nationally recognized CitiStat model to deploy necessary

resources in a timely and efficient manner based on actual survey data. Based on actual teacher survey data, Governor Easley in North Carolina enacted programs to: a) create evaluation tools for school principals, b) fund school-based professional services, c) allow teachers to have greater input to their professional development opportunities, and; d) direct facility-improvement funds to schools that need them the most.

***Continuing to Refine Efforts through Evaluation.*** Martin O'Malley and Anthony Brown know that improving Maryland's education system requires an engaged governor and lieutenant governor intent on making a steady, long-term commitment. Through the use of survey data and relentless follow-up on the programs directed at needs identified through the TWC's, the O'Malley-Brown administration will be able to measure the effectiveness of each educational initiative, which will allow it to spend tax-payer funds in the most effective, efficient manner possible.