

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2023 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

Senate Bill 735

(Senator Zucker, *et al.*)

Budget and Taxation and Education, Energy, and the Environment Ways and Means and Appropriations

Workgroup to Study the Wages of Education Support Professionals

This bill establishes the Workgroup to Study the Wages of Education Support Professionals (ESPs), staffed by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). In determining what percentage of ESPs earn a living wage in the State and to study increasing the wages of ESPs to attract and retain skilled workers, the workgroup must consider specified matters. The workgroup must submit an interim report by November 30, 2023, to specified committees of the General Assembly, and a final report with findings and recommendations by August 31, 2024. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2023, and terminates October 31, 2024.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. MSDE can staff the workgroup and provide expense reimbursements with existing budgeted resources. No effect on revenues.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: A member of the workgroup is not entitled to compensation but is entitled to reimbursement for expenses. The workgroup must elect the chair by a majority vote at the first meeting.

The workgroup must consider:

- the role of local school systems and the State in hiring ESPs;
- the number of ESPs employed by the State or a local school system, or as a contractor;
- any cost-sharing between the State and local school systems with regard to wages and salaries of ESPs;
- the total number of part-time and full-time ESPs in the State;
- the number of hours required to work to be considered a full-time employee;
- a complete list of ESP classifications by jurisdiction;
- the average hourly wage of ESPs in the State by jurisdiction;
- an analysis of the wage scale for ESPs;
- information on increased wages or bonuses by jurisdiction in the last five years;
- the amount of ESP vacancies in the State, by jurisdiction; and
- information on the future of ESP jobs in the State.

Current Law: Chapters 531 and 532 of 2022 required the Governor to include an appropriation in the fiscal 2024 budget that was equal to the number of noncertificated ESPs multiplied by \$500 to provide a \$500 bonus to each noncertificated ESP in fiscal 2024. MSDE was required to collect data from each local board of education on the number of noncertificated ESPs in each county and report the data as specified. “Noncertificated education support professionals” was defined as noncertificated public school employees designated as part of a bargaining unit under State law.

The fiscal 2023 budget, as enacted, included \$8.0 million in general funds within the Dedicated Purpose Account to be transferred by budget amendment to provide bonuses to “noncertified” ESPs. As required by the Acts, MSDE reported a total of 44,652 eligible staff, which resulted in an average bonus of \$179 per ESP. As a result, the fiscal 2024 budget as introduced includes a deficiency appropriation of \$14.3 million to provide sufficient funds for a \$500 bonus for each ESP in fiscal 2023. The budget also includes \$22.4 million in fiscal 2024 for the same purpose.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: HB 1234 (Delegate Wells) - Ways and Means and Appropriations.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 7, 2023
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