

Informational Testimony regarding Senate Bill 421 Primary and Secondary Schools – Bus Driver Wages – Study

**Finance
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The Maryland State Education Association offers this informational testimony on Senate Bill 421, legislation that requires the Governor’s Workforce Development Board (GWDB) within the Maryland Department of Labor (MDL) to evaluate and report on the possibility of paying higher wages to school bus drivers in the State by July 1, 2022.

MSEA represents 76,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland’s public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students for the careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated existing shortages in all job classifications for our educational support professionals. One group that has been under the spotlight during the return to in school instruction are our bus drivers. We are appreciative to the bill sponsors for their continued work to advocate for members of our education support professional community, especially during a time when we face critical staffing shortages in retaining and attracting individuals to the profession. However, the issue of low wages and staffing shortages apply to almost all classifications of education support professionals in our state.

Employees are attracted to jobs in which they can earn a livable wage in order to meet the many challenges of raising and sustaining a family. And as school employees trusted to transport, care, and educate our students, the least we can do



as a state is guarantee they can earn a living wage. Their public service is vital to meeting the needs of students and schools.

We are supportive of legislation that would create a workgroup to study increasing wages for all educational support staff classifications in the state. For this reason, we are in favor of Senate Bill 831, which would establish a workgroup to study and determine solutions on increasing wages and addressing issues of recruiting and retention in all job classifications.