

Testimony of Aruna Miller
Former Delegate and Candidate for Lieutenant Governor
Before the Ways and Means Committee
Education Support Professionals - Workgroup and Bonus
FAVORABLE (House Bill 1349)

Chair Delegate Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **House Bill 1349, Education Support Professionals - Workgroup and Bonus.**

First, allow me to thank Delegate Henson for sponsoring this bill, which seeks to better understand, support, and reward the remarkable work that educational support professionals perform every day in creating the safe, clean, and productive educational environment that our children deserve.

I submit this testimony, as a mother and the mother of a public school teacher and as a former member of the Maryland House of Delegates representing Legislative District 15 in Montgomery County. I saw first hand how vital our education support professionals are in preparing children for the future.

Maryland's education support professionals provide our teachers with the support they need to concentrate on their core job - educating our children. The services that our education support professionals provide, inside and outside of the classroom are vital; however, about half of Maryland's education support professionals make less than \$35,000 a year. For many Marylanders, that does not constitute a living wage.

House Bill 1349 takes the necessary step of creating a workgroup to study whether or not these public servants are being fairly compensated. We must do this to protect our teachers, ensure we are treating our employees equitably, and attract the kinds of educators we need to provide our children with the educational opportunities that are their right.

In addition, the measure would provide a much-needed and unquestionably earned \$500 bonus for our educational support professionals. These are the people who have been on the front line in getting us past the pandemic - cleaning classrooms and driving our kids to school. This bonus is an overdue recognition of the work they do and the value they bring to our state.

As I have mentioned before, there are a host of actions the state must take to preserve and protect Maryland's world-class education system, including fully funding and implementing the Blueprint for Maryland's future. I ask the Committee to take another step toward that end today by reporting favorably on House Bill 1349.