

SB1043 - Favorable
Senate EEE Committee
March 6, 2024
SEIU Local 500

My name is Vicki Brown and I am an Educational Interpreter for the Deaf and Hard of hearing program for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). As an MCPS employee and a SEIU Local 500 member I am deeply concerned about cuts to vital programs and positions that impact our students, my colleagues, our members and the work that we do. Now is not the time to divest from staff. Now is the time to invest in our staff members who come to work each day to ensure student success.

I wanted to speak out about the contracting out that is happening in MCPS. We are interpreters/transliterators, bus drivers, custodial staff, paraeducators, food and nutrition workers and other support professionals who ALL have essential roles in our school and in the community. We deserve a living wage, respect and fairness. We DO NOT deserve to have vacant positions filled by contractors who earn twice as much as we do and who are NOT invested in the success of our students. MCPS is talking about how much money they do not have to fund the budget and hire employees to fill vacant roles, yet they continue to outsource our jobs. As I stated, I am an Educational Interpreter for MCPS. MCPS recognizes our unique group and our skillset, but MCPS does not recognize that the wage is still not at a fair labor market rate to attract new interpreters or retain the ones currently employed. MCPS has an inequitable practice of hiring contractors and agencies to fill these vacant positions, yet they don't look at how to attract, recruit and retain public school employees. MCPS is discussing how much of a budget shortfall they have, but is anyone looking at the hundreds of thousands of dollars being spent on contracting out? Furthermore, the agencies that send interpreters to our schools are a temporary fix. Our schools need dedicated public school employees who are valued by their employers, administrators and supervisors.

The Responsible Contracting in Our Public Schools Act will address subcontracting issues by implementing a process for employers to speak with us before decisions are made and negotiate with us regarding the effect of these decisions on educators and students. This bill will require public school employees to notify employers upon considering subcontracting work and services. The bill will make sure our employer can't subcontract our work during the term of our collective bargaining agreement. This bill will require public school employers to perform a cost comparison showing the cost

of in house services compared to services provided by contractors and agencies. I am certain that there is not a cost comparison being done for the interpreters/transliterators.

The amount of money being spent on contractors and agencies is astronomical and could easily free up budget line items and fill voids in essential staff. Stop outsourcing our jobs to contractors and agencies and invest in your dedicated and committed support professionals. Our students deserve it and so do we.

Thank you,

Vicki Brown
On Behalf of SEIU Local 500