



Maryland Education Coalition



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Date: March 9, 2022
BILL: [SB0831](#) / [HB1394](#)
POSITION: Support

TITLE: Education Support Professionals - Workgroup and Bonus
COMMITTEE: Budget and Tax

SB831 would establish a workgroup to study the wages of education support professionals and it would require the Governor to include in the annual budget bill an appropriation to provide pay bonuses to education support professionals for fiscal years 2023 and 2024.

This bill seeks to address the serious and significant shortage of education support professionals along with ensuring that Maryland corrects the long-standing issue of not adequately compensating these essential public school system employees. Education Support Professionals provide a range of professional services in public schools, including the provision of one-to-one support for students with disabilities, assisting teachers with classroom activities, monitoring hallways and lunchrooms, and welcoming students at the beginning of the day and seeing them off at the end of the day. They also serve as the school’s “pinch-hitter” filling in where the help is needed.

The future of Maryland’s public school students depends on schools having the staffing capacity to meet the mandates of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future including freeing teachers up to be able to plan effectively for their students and collaborate with other educators. Extra eyes, hands, and ears help to create a professional experience for teachers.

Unfortunately, these essential employees are paid wages that do not meet the test of a living wage and often time are not full-time employees and therefore not eligible for benefits. Prior to the pandemic there was a shortage of Education Support Specialists, since the pandemic the shortage is at a crises level. As Kesa Summers, a reading specialist who teaches English at Eastern Middle School in Silver Spring, Md, described in the Education Week article, [Staffing Shortages Are Hurting Students Who Need Extra Reading Support](#), “One person in a class of 25, they can only do so much,... even with the planning time, you can’t ask a person to be three different people.”

If we are to build a World Class education system in Maryland it has to begin with adequately and appropriately compensating Education Support Professionals to ensure that every Maryland school has sufficient staffing capacity.

The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) is the oldest, largest, most experienced, and diverse group of public education stakeholders in Maryland. We are an independent, non-partisan voice for Maryland’s K-12 students. MEC’s goal is to ensure adequate, equitable funding and systemic accountability for the estimated 900,000 public school students in Maryland regardless of academic, cultural, economic, geographic, racial, or other demographic status. MEC is committed to advocating for state education policies that deliver on the constitutional right and civil right for all students to access a high-quality, competitive education.

For these and other reasons, we urge a favorable report for SB831.

American Civil Liberties Union of MD, Arts Education in Maryland Schools, Arts Every Day, Attendance Works, CASA, Children’s Behavioral Health Coalition, Decoding Dyslexia of MD, Disability Rights Maryland, League of Women Voters of MD, Let Them See Clearly, Right to Read Maryland, Maryland Coalition for Community Schools, Maryland Coalition for Gifted & Talented Ed, Maryland Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition, Maryland Out of School Time Network, Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education, MSC-NAACP, Maryland School Psychologists’ Association, Parent Advocacy Consortium, Public Justice Center, School Social Workers of MD, Strong Schools Maryland, Kalman Hettleman, David Hornbeck, Shanetta Martin, Sharon Rubinstein, Rick Tyler, Jr.