



TO: The Honorable Guy Guzzone, Chair
Members, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
The Honorable Craig J. Zucker

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer

DATE: March 2, 2022

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 706 – *Nonpublic Educational Programs – Children With Disabilities – Costs of Teacher Salaries*

For more than 60 years, Linwood Center has been providing life-changing programs and services for children and adults living with autism and related developmental disabilities. Linwood currently supports children and adults on the autism spectrum from jurisdictions throughout the State of Maryland. Linwood is among the relatively few programs in the United States and in the State of Maryland that provides comprehensive education and residential programs throughout the lifespan under one service umbrella. Linwood offers program continuity from childhood into adulthood, developing lifelong relationships with individuals living with autism from elementary school through retirement and old age. Linwood's accredited nonpublic special education program and licensed residential programs provide intensive positive behavioral supports and long-term educational and vocational services to Maryland's autism community. Linwood respectfully offers its **support** for the provisions of Senate Bill 706.

Senate Bill 706 provides a permanent solution to the challenges that Linwood and other nonpublic special education schools face in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers due to the lack of salary parity requirements in the current budget framework. It is not uncommon for a teacher to gain valuable experience teaching at Linwood only to have them leave for a better paying position in a public school system. Senate Bill 706 will help to align teacher salaries for those working in the nonpublic special education schools to those of their public school counterparts.

The need to establish teacher parity is even more critical given the dramatic increase in public school teacher salaries that is expected as a result of the passage of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The expected increases will exacerbate an already challenging environment for teacher recruitment and retention and will further widen the pay gap between public and nonpublic special education school teachers. Furthermore, the current teacher workforce challenges must be addressed if Maryland is to continue to meet the expectations and requirements of the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which mandates a "continuum of alternative placements to meet the needs of children with disabilities for special education and related services.

Passage of Senate Bill 706 provides a simple and justified directive to the Maryland State Department of Education to provide a budgetary framework that ensures there is parity in teacher salaries between public and nonpublic special education schools and that achieving that salary parity does not require the nonpublic special education school to reduce other necessary expenses reflected in their budgets. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:
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