

Submitted Testimony by Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-05) on H.B. 1349 / S.B. 831

“I appreciate the opportunity to add my support today for the legislation introduced by Senator Zucker to establish a workgroup to study education support professionals’ wages and benefits. I want to thank Chairwoman Atterbeary and Vice Chair Washington for holding this hearing today. This is an issue that affects every student and public-school family in our state.

“Education-support professionals – or ‘ESPs’ – are critical to the ability of our schools to teach and nurture the next generation of Marylanders. Not only do they perform essential duties to keep schools running, to feed students at breakfast and lunchtime, and to manage school administration, ESPs also assist faculty with teaching the most at-risk, highest-need students in the classroom. During the COVID-19 pandemic, ESPs have taken on even more responsibilities, helping to sanitize classrooms and facilitate virtual and hybrid learning. They deserve more than just our admiration and respect; they deserve the fair wages and benefits that enable them to advance in their careers and pursue opportunities to move up.

“The more-than 41,000 ESPs in Maryland are looking to the House of Delegates to act on this legislation. Right now, Maryland ESPs earn \$29,000 less, on average, than the average worker in our state. Considering the vital role they play in children’s education, we ought to be doing more to ensure that they receive the pay and benefits they have earned through their hard work. The first step in doing so is to create a Workgroup to Study ESPs, which this legislation would accomplish.

“Families in my district, which includes much of Prince George’s County, parts of Anne Arundel County, and all of Southern Maryland, ought to be able to send their children to schools whose ESPs are fairly compensated and that can attract the best and most motivated to serve in these critical roles. I urge the Committee to approve this legislation, and I thank Senator Zucker for their leadership in bringing it forward.”