

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 1349
Education Support Professionals - Workgroup and Bonus**

House Ways & Means Committee

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1:00 PM

**Cheryl Bost
President**

The Maryland State Education Association stands in strong support of House Bill 1349, a bill that would not only provide a bonus for the state's dedicated and essential education support professionals (ESPs), but also create a work group to develop guidance on the best ways to address issues of recruitment and retainment, by increasing ESP wages.

MSEA represents 76,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students for the careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

School support staff are essential to everyday function of the educational ecosystem. We depend on their expertise and commitment to students and families for small group virtual learning, the distribution and maintenance of devices, record-keeping and tracking of ever-changing policies, endless upkeep of school systems and safety protocols, and breakfasts and lunches, and transportation. But for far too long our school support staff have not gotten the respect and recognition that they deserve—or the compensation that makes sure that we can continue to recruit and retain outstanding individuals in these critical positions.

We are thankful for the hard work of the General Assembly in passing the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, but crisis level staffing shortages, exacerbated by the



pandemic, require both a short term and long-term solution to address the low wages of ESPs. HB 1349 would utilize the current budget surplus to give support staff a \$500 bonus in FY23 and FY24 and create a workgroup to investigate support staff wages and present ways to improve them to the General Assembly to inform future legislation.

I kindly urge the committee for a favorable vote on HB 1349.