



DATE: March 31, 2022 **COMMITTEE:** House Ways and Means
BILL NO: Senate Bill 706
BILL TITLE: Nonpublic Educational Programs - Children With Disabilities - Costs of Teacher Salaries
POSITION: Support

Kennedy Krieger Institute supports Senate Bill 706 - Nonpublic Educational Programs - Children With Disabilities - Costs of Teacher Salaries

Bill Summary:

Senate Bill 706 requires the Governor to include a certain appropriation in the annual budget bill to the Maryland State Department of Education to support the operations of nonpublic educational programs, specifically teacher salaries.

Background:

Kennedy Krieger proudly serves the State of Maryland through our nonpublic schools and currently provides educational and related clinical services for nearly 500 publicly funded students with complex intellectual and developmental disabilities. Child and adolescent students are referred to, and placed in, our school programs by the local school's IEP team, which includes the student's parents or guardians, when it is determined that the local school/system is unable to meet the needs of the student. As stated, we serve publicly funded students--- we do not charge parents for tuition. This year, as is typically the case, our students come from over half of the school districts in Maryland. Serving students with complex medical, developmental, and behavioral needs, our staffing model requires that we employ nearly an equal number of highly trained teachers, related-service clinicians, and support staff. We have long-standing partnerships with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the LEAs based upon our specialized expertise and commitment to the population of children we serve.

Rationale:

SB 706 seeks to support nonpublic schools teacher salaries to ensure that their compensation accurately matches their level of professional training and talent.

The ability of our schools to provide exemplary service for students with significant special education needs, as well as related clinical and behavioral supports is, in large part, because of our highly skilled and educated workforce of teachers and support staff who dedicate themselves to the children and families we serve. Unfortunately, because of the sizeable salary disparities between public and nonpublic schoolteachers, our educators annually face the decision to remain with our program or seek significantly higher wages with the public school systems. Kennedy Krieger Schools has seen a frankly unsustainable turnover of 20%, per school year over 10 years, of our special education teachers. This high turnover predates the added challenges imposed by workforce shortages among school teachers in Maryland and elsewhere.

In 2020, the Maryland General Assembly passed budget narrative that formed a Salary Parity Workgroup at MSDE. As a member of the Maryland Association of Nonpublic Special Education Facilities (MANSEF) and with an ongoing collaborative partnership with MSDE, Kennedy Krieger was honored to participate in the workgroup. The workgroup, composed of representation from the Local School Systems, Nonpublic Schools, MSDE and Legislative Services, reviewed survey data compiled from two separate studies. Both studies found a gap when comparing annual salaries between a nonpublic educator and a public school educator. Depending on the jurisdiction of comparison the gap was between \$3,600 and \$23,600 (7.3% and 25.8%, respectively).

As recently as 25 years ago, when Kennedy Krieger School had only one program and there were fewer nonpublic school options, Maryland's students with complex disabilities were often separated from their families and sent out of state to residential facilities, at significantly greater expense to Maryland as well as extraordinary distress to children and their families. Nonpublic schools were established in Maryland to assure that these students are able to continue living with their families while attending school.

Kennedy Krieger appreciates the legislative commitment to further gather and review information that will help with much needed, long-term, systemic approach to achieving parity. Through that, Maryland can continue to support the workforce necessary to provide free appropriate public education to all Maryland students seeking public education.

Kennedy Krieger Institute requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 706.