

**Written Testimony from American Federation of Teachers-Maryland  
Submitted by Sandra Davis, AFT-Maryland Vice President  
HB 1349 – Education Support Professionals – Workgroup and Bonus  
Before the House Ways & Means Committee  
March 10, 2022  
SUPPORT**

Good afternoon, Chair Atterbeary and members of the House Ways and Means Committee.

My name is Sandra Davis, and I am an employee of the Baltimore City Public School System, working for the past 32 years as a paraeducator. Also, I am a vice president of AFT-Maryland and Chair of the Baltimore Teachers Union Paraprofessional and School Related Personnel (PSRP) chapter. On behalf of the AFT-Maryland, I ask for a favorable report to HB 1349, the bill that would form a workgroup to study the wages and compensation packages to education support personnel who are so vital to the education of Maryland's students.

Madam chair, it is important that this committee recognize and appreciate the work I, along with my fellow paraeducators and support personnel do in order to be sure the students of Baltimore City schools have the best educational outcomes. In my 32 years as a paraeducator at 7 different schools in the city, I have worked with hundreds of students preparing them to be successful and productive members of the workforce. Not only do we provide academic support to our students, we focus on their social and emotional needs. Many of us also provide assistance to our medically fragile population to ensure the best possible education experience. On a day-to-day basis, an average Maryland student encounters six support personnel employees before they even step foot in the classroom at the beginning of the school day.

If enacted, this bill would be a step in the right direction towards just compensation for paraeducators and support personnel and recognizing the value of the work numerous different support personnel are engaged in on a daily basis. First, it would create a commission that would research the type of work and compensation levels for educational support staff in different counties across the state, and report back their findings to the legislature. In addition, the bill calls for the state to provide bonuses to education support personnel of up to \$1000. These bonuses can be used to help attract and retain vital staff that has been leaving the education ranks over the past few years due to the pandemic emergency.

Members of the committee, for too long the work I and my fellow education support professionals have done for Maryland's children has gone unrecognized and unappreciated. Yet without the work of the education support staff in our state's public classrooms, our public schools would not be able to provide Maryland's students with the education they need. Again, AFT-Maryland calls for a favorable report for HB 1349. Thank you.