

Good afternoon

My name is Dr. Chip Maust – Vice President and Chief of Schools and Residential Treatment Centers at Sheppard Pratt. I have dedicated the entirety of my 29-year career to special education in Maryland. As the largest provider of nonpublic special education in Maryland, Sheppard Pratt operates 12 special education schools in 6 counties, serves over 650 of the state’s most vulnerable students and employs over 900 staff, including 125 teachers.

Let me be clear about the students we serve at Sheppard Pratt and across all the nonpublic schools across Maryland – we educate the students that our public-school counterparts are ill equipped to manage. There is simply NO reason that our teachers should be compensated 10-25% lower than their public-school peers.

We are losing teachers at an alarming rate to the public school system --- 28% over the last four years. These teachers consistently express that they would prefer to stay, but the opportunity to make thousands of dollars more is too difficult to pass up. Due to the highly specialized nature of our work, it is imperative that teachers build strong, nurturing relationships with our students – this is accomplished through teacher tenure – not by teacher turnover.

There is a long-standing belief in the nonpublic special education community that we are considered a “training ground” for public schools. Our teachers gain invaluable instructional and behavior management experience, only to be drawn away by the allure of a higher salary.

As a leader in this field, I urge and implore you to come to the aid of our nonpublic teachers. NOW is the time for action from this body. If we continue to lose teachers at this rate, the number of students we can serve will plummet – placing additional stress on an increasingly fragile public school system.

I appreciate your time and attention.