



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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**SB 735 - Workgroup to Study the Wages of Education Support Professionals
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
March 8, 2023**

SUPPORT

**Donna S. Edwards
President**

Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 735. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of Maryland's 300,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

Maryland has over 56,000 education support professionals but they are left behind in statewide discussions about school staffing shortages.¹ The term education support professional includes our paraeducators, clerical workers, custodial staff, food service workers, and more who all provide valuable services to our students and make our public education system possible. Despite their importance to our schools, these workers are underpaid with the average education support professional making just \$40,523 per year for full time work. Nearly 50% make less than \$35,000 per year.

Last year's FY2023 budget included \$8 million for local education agencies to issue bonuses to their education support professionals, but bonuses will not fix systemic underpayment. We support SB 735's approach to ensuring that labor unions are fully involved in the process of discussing issues that impact their members.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 735.

¹ National Education Association, "Education Support Professional Earnings Report." NEA Research, April 2022.