



SUPPORT

Senate Bill 311:

Nonpublic Educational Programs – Children with Disabilities – Cost of Teacher Salaries

OFFERED ON BEHALF OF

The Maryland Association of Nonpublic Special Education Facilities
(MANSEF)

BEFORE THE

Senate Budget and Tax

February 8, 2023

The Maryland Association of Nonpublic Special Education Facilities (MANSEF) offers this testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 311 on behalf of the 70 special education schools across Maryland currently serving approximately 3500 publicly funded school children. Our member schools employ over 1500 teachers, clinicians and administrators.

Senate Bill 311 will align teacher salaries for those working in the special education schools to those of their public school counterparts. Retaining skilled teachers continues to be a challenge and we cannot keep pace to competitively compensate our staff.

MSDE conducted a salary parity study in December 2021. The results of this study showed average teacher salaries in public schools and special education schools differed greatly. After accounting for differences in teachers' total paid hours, teachers' wages in public schools and special education schools differed by between 23.3% and 40.7%. One specific recommendation from this study is to allow the special education schools to provide their teachers with a salary equivalent to the local school salaries.

Additionally, the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Act provides that public school teacher salaries will continue to increase over the next few years; thereby, the pay gap between public and special education school teachers will become even wider pulling crucial resources away from students most in need. MANSEF asks that our members schools have the ability to align teacher salaries to that of the local school system where the special education school is located. This increase will be phased in over a 3-year period.

SB 311 also proposes to amend the term "nonpublic" which we believe reflects the intent of The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA). The term "nonpublic" is not mentioned in

IDEA which mandates a “continuum of alternative placements to meet the needs of children with disabilities for special education and related services.” Therefore, the MANSEF special education schools are an extension of the public schools and fulfill an essential function in meeting students’ particular educational needs.

The MANSEF schools are uniquely equipped to provide the specific, multidisciplinary, frequently intensive resources students with special needs require. The scope and depth of staff expertise afford specialized, integrated programming that goes beyond academic education and encompass the social and emotional well-being of each student. In addition to the skilled, highly trained teachers, special education schools are staffed to provide other critical services such as behavior programs, crisis management and wrap-around supports.

Because our teacher salaries are far behind the public schools, the gap between public and special education school teacher salaries continues to grow. Our teachers are to be valued, recognized and appreciated. The current workforce shortage must be addressed for us to continue to meet the high expectations of IDEA. It is for these reasons that MANSEF respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 311.

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