

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 735
Workgroup to Study the Wages of Education Support Professionals
Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

March 8, 2023

1:00pm

Hi, my name is Shamirror Riley, I am a Secretary at Park Heights Academy in Baltimore, MD and I am also a Paraprofessional and School Related Personal and member of the Baltimore Teachers Union. I support Senate Bill 735, and I urge a favorable report on this bill.

School secretaries are the heart of the school. We are the front-line workers that held our schools together during the pandemic. I believe we have earned the right to receive improvements to our current wages. There are Educational Support Professionals doing essential and incredible work all over the state of Maryland sustaining our schools and serving our communities. Educational Support Professionals, or PSRPs like we say in Baltimore, experience unique challenges working in the inner city of Baltimore. From not enough teachers to a lack of books, to outdated buildings that do not have proper air conditioning or heat.

Through it all, we still provide countless hours of hard work and dedication to our students way beyond our scheduled work hours. In addition to our job titles, PSRPs have stepped up to help fill many of the teacher vacancies that our schools are experiencing and we do so for much lower wages than a traditional teacher.

Additionally, due to inflation, most PSRPs can no longer afford our basic necessities. Our wages have not improved adequately over the years. Many of us have taken on second jobs just to make ends meet. This is why the study called for in SB735 is so important. It sheds light on how our low wages can't keep up with inflation and how this affects education support professionals in Baltimore and throughout the state.

SB 735 establishes a workgroup to study the wages of education support professionals to determine what percentage of ESPs and PSRPs in the State earn a living wage and to study increasing the wages of ESPs and PSRPs to attract and retain skilled workers like us.

A key component to solving our current staffing crisis in MD Public Schools is by recruiting and retaining educational support professionals.

SB 735 provides a much needed study to ensure that Educational Support Professionals across Maryland are paid adequately for the work we do and that we can stay in our professions and continue to serve our students, our communities and our school staff..

I strongly urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 735.