

Tamika Peters
The Heart and Pulse of a School
Testimony in favor of SB 735 - Workgroup to Study the Wages of Education Support
Professionals
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Wednesday March 8, 2023

Good afternoon, my name is Tamika Peters and I am a Staff Associate at Liberty Elementary School in Baltimore Maryland. In my role I support students and develop educators to reach awesome heights every day. I am currently in the Paraprofessionals and School Related Personnel Chapter of the Baltimore Teachers Union. I am writing in support of SB 735 Workgroup to Study the Wages of Education Support Professionals.

Support Staff and Personnel are the heart and pulse of all educational systems. They are usually the first ones to arrive and the last to leave. In many districts, they are deemed essential as employees and in the need of supporting the staff and students in our school buildings. With all of that, the majority of support staff in Maryland school districts are not making a living wage. A living wage is defined as the minimum income necessary for a worker to meet their basic needs. Many support personnel do not make the minimum income to maintain a decent lifestyle of necessities. Due to this, they will work longer hours and/or work another job just to make his or her ends meet.

Support staff need to make a living wage. They need to be able to work on the level that they want and still be able to enjoy life. They do not need the fear of something in life happening that will put an extra strain on their already tight budget. Many support staff are just one paycheck or even one situation like car repairs, medical emergency etc away from failing even more behind in bills and maintaining the household. Once you add a family and regular living expenses, the majority of support staff are stressed. Any person that works in the school system, does it because they love what they do. They love their community and the people that they serve. Being in education is one of the most rewarding professions but also one of the the most underfunded , unappreciated and underpaid in the city, state and county. Increasing the living wage in Maryland will not only help with retention of these very important people in the school system, but also give a needed strength to the people we need to consider the heart and pulse of a school. For these reasons and more, I urge the committee to adopt a favorable report on SB 735.