



TO: The Honorable Guy Guzzone, Chair
Members, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
The Honorable Marc Korman

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
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DATE: March 28, 2023

RE: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT** – House Bill 448 – *Nonpublic Education – Placements of Children With Disabilities – Teacher Salaries (Teacher Pay Parity Act)*

For more than 60 years, Linwood Center has been providing life-changing programs and services for children and adults living with autism and related developmental disabilities. Linwood currently supports children and adults on the autism spectrum from jurisdictions throughout the State of Maryland. Linwood is among the relatively few programs in the United States and in the State of Maryland that provides comprehensive education and residential programs throughout the lifespan under one service umbrella. Linwood offers program continuity from childhood into adulthood, developing lifelong relationships with individuals living with autism from elementary school through retirement and old age. Linwood's accredited nonpublic special education program and licensed residential programs provide intensive positive behavioral supports and long-term educational and vocational services to Maryland's autism community. Linwood respectfully offers its **support with amendment** for House Bill 448.

House Bill 448 provides a permanent solution to the challenges that Linwood and other special education schools face in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers, due to the lack of salary parity requirements in the current budget framework. It is not uncommon for a teacher to gain valuable experience teaching at Linwood only to have them leave for a better paying position in a public-school system.

Linwood appreciates the work of both the Senate and House sponsors to address the teacher recruitment and retention challenges of nonpublic special education programs. However, we do believe that the bill requires further clarifying amendments to achieve the goal of providing nonpublic special education program teachers a comparable salary to that of their public-school counterparts through systemic change that embeds parity within our current budget framework. We believe that under the current rate-setting methodology established by MSDE and the current cost-sharing between the State and local school systems, salary parity can be achieved by working within current timelines and framework. The additional amendments, which we are working on with the bill sponsors, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), and stakeholders, will ensure a framework that does not create a new budget process.

The need to establish teacher parity is more critical than ever, given the continued increase in

public-school teacher salaries that is expected as a result of the passage of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The expected increases will exacerbate an already challenging environment for teacher recruitment and retention and will further widen the pay gap between teachers in public schools and teachers in special education schools. Furthermore, the current teacher workforce challenges must be addressed if Maryland is to continue to meet the expectations and requirements of the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which mandates a "continuum of alternative placements to meet the needs of children with disabilities for special education and related services."

Passage of House Bill 448 with the suggested amendments will provide a simple and justified framework to provide parity in teacher salaries between public and special education schools, which not only helps to address the current recruitment and retention challenges of special education schools but also enhances Maryland's educational framework and its compliance with IDEA. Further, the proposed increase in salaries for special education programs is phased in over three years to lessen the fiscal impact. With the noted clarifying amendments referenced by the sponsor, a favorable report is requested.