

**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**

My name is Corey Witherspoon and I am a Wholeness Specialist for Pimlico Elementary Middle School in Baltimore, MD. I support Senate Bill 735, and I urge a favorable report on this bill.

When an irate parent came to the school wielding a weapon and wanting to cause harm on staff it was myself an Education Support Professional, or as we say in Baltimore, a PSRP member that deescalated her. I risked my own life to protect fellow staff. I am not an anomaly.

Every school has an ESP like me, Corey Witherspoon, that would risk their lives to save both staff and students. WE ARE WORTHY of wage increases. We are risking our lives to protect our schools. We are Frontline in our schools and our value can not be measured but should be compensated. Baltimore City Public Schools PSRP Members are vital to Baltimore City Public schools. We teach in classrooms, we practice case management, we provide mental health support, we serve as mentors, security, mediators, and group leaders. PSRP Members are the people that students trust. They let us know about issues of violence that are about to occur so it will not happen in the school buildings. Our work is admirable. We are para educators that help to make sure students get their accommodations and modifications in IEPs.

We are multitasking educators that have to teach young people at different educational levels. We are problem solvers, advocates, community leaders, motivators, AND testing proctors.

Our schools are overcrowded but undermanned causing educational support professionals to be overwhelmed. We overcome our travails for the love of our students so that we can serve our young people with the greatest professionalism. You cannot sustain a school without us. Educational Support Staff, work out of love because it's needed but we cannot continue to work for free. In Baltimore we work in areas like Park Heights, Druid Hill AND Edmondson that's surrounded by darkness. Education Support Professionals are the light that teaches our young people that education is important and that if they really want to change Baltimore then it starts with education.

Educational Support Professionals teach our young people how to be good Baltimoreans. We manage payrolls and make staff get paid all across our school system. In the wake of the COVID

pandemic, our ESP members conducted covid tracing to ensure safety in schools to prevent a potential breakout. ESPs handle retirement and benefit packages so that all district staff can be compensated and can contribute to making our schools better.

In Baltimore, ESPs include our community school coordinators who risk their lives going into dangerous neighborhoods to make sure our young people have the services that they need. Our Cafeteria Workers fed our students during the shutdown of schools regardless of their fears about catching the virus and will do it again at moments notice. We are the frontline and the unheralded heroes in Baltimore's Schools. We must be respected and respect comes with more than a thank you. You show respect to one by rewarding them financially so that they can focus on the work instead of how they are going to pay their bills.

SB 735 provides a much needed study to ensure that Educational Support Professionals across Maryland are paid adequately for the works we do.

**I strongly urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 735.**