

February 7, 2023

Testimony for SB311

Good afternoon,

I have been working in a non-public school since September 2008. In that time, I have been a teacher, a program coordinator, IEP coordinator, assistant principal, and now education director.

I have been surrounded by some of the most intelligent, talented, passionate, dedicated, and professional individuals. These individuals give their all for a population of students that the public school system has determined need a level of care they cannot provide. And our staff do it for a fraction of what their counterparts make in the public school system. Too many times, the better pay it too much for them to pass up and we are left to find the next individual to promote and train to meet our students' needs.

I never fault the staff that leave for better pay. I know we are asking them to work in a 12-month school for less money. I'm honestly amazed at how many teachers do stay, forsaking better pay because of their dedication to our students and our mission to improve the lives of the students. We shouldn't have to ask the staff to make this sacrifice. They hold the same certifications and meet the same requirements as public-school teachers. Our teachers deserve equal pay, and our students deserve highly qualified and experienced teachers. Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Hajjar". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "M" and "H".

Mark Hajjar
Education Director
Sheppard Pratt School, located in Rockville, MD.