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**SB735 Workgroup to Study the Wages of Education Support Professional
Budget & Taxation Committee
March 8, 2023**

Favorable

AFSCME support SB 753. This bill establishes the Workgroup to Study the Wages of Education Support Professionals staffed by the Maryland State Department of Education. In determining what percentage of Education Support Professional earn a living wage in the State and to study increasing the wages of ESPs to attract and retain skilled workers, the workgroup must consider specified matters.

School support staff play an important role in ensuring students are learning in a safe and supportive learning environment. Our AFSCME members are in transportation, food service, health services, paraprofessionals, security, and maintenance within Maryland Public schools. Employees. School support staff can foster positive, trusting relationships with students and improve school climate by encouraging parent and family involvement in their students' education. School support staff can go beyond the curriculum by providing youth development resources for families and teachers that address trauma-informed practices and positive behavioral interventions. Because students connect with school support staff on many occasions throughout the school day, support staff can model positive behavior and send positive messages to students as well.

Staffing shortage continues to be an issue within our schools and our support staff are being asked to do more with less and without the resources they need and the without the compensation that they deserve. The workload, low morale, and stress issues is what causes burnout and many to leave the school system. That's why SB753 is so important, and this study is needed to begin to address the resources our support staff need in our public schools. While we are thankful for the Blueprint for Maryland Future provides support to our schools and some ESP positions, we can do more.

Children need to be in a safe and healthy environment to flourish. There are many people who work together to make this happen, great teachers combined with great support staff. Let's give our support staff the resources they need and respect that they deserve.

For these reasons AFSCME ask for a favorable report on SB753.

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO

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