

March 1, 2023

Senator Brian Feldman, Chairman
Education, Energy & Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

Senator Guy Guzzone, Chairman
Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary, Chair
House Ways & Means Committee
131 House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SUPPORT with Amendment, SB 791 / HB 883 – Public School – Job Duties & Salaries

Dear Chairman Feldman, Chairman Guzzone, and Chair Atterbeary:

My name is C’Rai Weeden Shannon. I am a mother of a child that receives school-based speech-language pathology services in the state of Maryland. In addition, I am a Maryland licensed speech language pathologist. I work as an adjunct professor and clinical instructor of graduate students pursuing their master’s degree in the field of speech-language pathology at Towson University. In addition I am the past president of the Maryland Speech-Language-Hearing Association (MSHA) representing speech-language pathologists and audiologists living and working in Maryland.

I am writing to you in support of Senate Bill 791/HB 883 which would provide salary supplements to speech language pathologists in Maryland public schools with advanced credentials like those offered to my teacher colleagues through the Blueprint legislation. Speech-language pathologists provide direct, specialized instruction to students with disabilities and are solely responsible and accountable for their Individualized Education Program communication goals. Our advanced national certification – the American Speech Language Hearing Association Certificate of Clinical Competence (ASHA CCC-SLP) – requires that we hold a Master’s degree in speech pathology, complete a clinical fellowship, pass a standardized national exam, and rate highly through a peer review of our practice (Clinical Fellowship Skills Inventory – 21 skills rated based on 18 hours of direct observation of our practice and 18 hours of indirect review of written products, etc). The ASHA CCC-SLP is as rigorous as National Board Teaching Certification.

Speech-language pathology is the 3rd biggest staff shortage area in Maryland schools according to the Maryland State Department of Education. Salary supplements will help recruit, hire, and retain highly-qualified speech language pathologists to meet the needs

of Maryland children. Currently, districts are using contractors, virtual services, providing compensatory FAPE awards, or paying for private special education schools which cost millions of dollars more than adequately staffing our schools with direct hire speech language pathologists. At least 21 states and hundreds of local jurisdictions offer salary supplements to speech-language pathologists who hold the national CCC-SLP credential for this very purpose. Many who offer salary supplements to teachers with NBTC offer the same supplement to speech-language pathologists with CCC-SLP. Maryland's Blueprint is a historic piece of legislation that will make a difference in the lives of countless children. Please ensure our children with disabilities have the same experience and access to the high-quality speech therapy services they deserve.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C'Rai Weeden Shannon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some loops and flourishes.

C'Rai Weeden Shannon