

2/7/2023

To Whom It May Concern regarding SB 311,

My name is Evan Parker and I represent the Baltimore Lab School, a nonpublic special education school in Baltimore City. I am writing today to ask for a favorable vote for Senate Bill 311. This bill is important to my school.

Maryland is fortunate to have a strong history of maintaining a full continuum of placement options for students with special needs under IDEA. It is a robust system and one that is envied across the country. When the local public school systems are unable to implement a child's IEP, they rely on Baltimore Lab School. We are serving 100 publicly funded students from 7 different Local School Systems. In order to support the high expectations for our publicly funded students, it is imperative that we adequately compensate our teachers similarly to that of their public school counterparts.

There has been a long-standing issue that the teachers working in our nonpublic special education schools do not have parity with their public school counterparts and this bill will help to provide a means to correct this.

On a personal note, I am the parent of 5 children in the Maryland school system, one of which is diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Though she is served at this time at her local public school here in Baltimore City, we are well aware that there may come a time she cannot be served at this school and may need alternatives. In Baltimore, for instance, the alternatives for students on a non-public basis that are not behavior based are very, very limited. My school, for instance, is one of the only MANSEF schools that is for arts, language, and learning disabilities versus a school linked to disabilities for behavior. Perhaps, if we had stronger legislation such as SB311, that would pave the way for more schools that afford students a non-public option in the event their local school cannot serve them, as is their right under ADA and IDEA. It is my hope, that as a teacher working at one of these schools that my child or any child who does not have a behavior-based disability, can find such an option and at that option, there are teachers paid with parity. Compared to the teacher counterparts in the public system, especially considering this non-public option is supporting the failures of that public model; the teachers at non-publics serve the students with the most needs and should represent parity in pay that honors this fact.

Thank you for all you are doing to ensure our Maryland students have all the resources necessary to receive the very best education. Please support our hard-working teachers and vote favorably on Senate Bill 958. If you have any question, I can be reached at 443-255-3259.

Thank you,

Evan Parker