



**SUPPORT
House Bill 1234:**

Workgroup to Study the Wages of Education Support Professionals

OFFERED ON BEHALF OF

The Maryland Association of Nonpublic Special Education Facilities
(MANSEF)

BEFORE THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS

March 14, 2023

The Maryland Association of Nonpublic Special Education Facilities (MANSEF) offers this testimony in SUPPORT of HB 1234 and respectfully requests membership on this very important workgroup. We offer this testimony on behalf of the 70 nonpublic special education schools across Maryland currently serving approximately 3500 publicly funded school children with special needs. Our member schools employ over 1500 teachers, clinicians, and administrators.

HB 1234 proposes to create a workgroup to study the wages, provide guidance on issues such as working conditions, recruitment, and retention of Education Support Professionals (ESPs.) Our member schools could not function without the critical support of our ESPs. They are vital and valued members of the daily lives of our students.

Retaining skilled ESPs continues to be a challenge and we cannot keep pace to competitively compensate these very hard-working individuals. After gaining valuable experience working in our special placement schools, these dedicated support professionals often leave for better paying positions elsewhere. The upheaval of the pandemic created a further divide and hardship for so many in the special needs community and it was the ESPs who stepped up to help with the many technology issues, sanitizing of buildings and mental health support so desperately needed for our students.

While the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Act (HB1300 of 2020) which has now been enacted, provides that public school teacher salaries will increase dramatically over the next few years; it does not adequately address the needs of ESPs and those working in the special schools.

The special education placement schools are crucial to the fulfillment of IDEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. IDEA which mandates a "continuum of alternative placements to meet the needs of children with disabilities for special education and related services." Our

special education schools are one component in that continuum and fulfill a unique and essential role in meeting students' particular educational needs and serve an important role for Maryland to comply with the federal law regarding education for special needs students.

The MANSEF schools are uniquely equipped to provide the specific, multidisciplinary, frequently intensive resources students with special needs require. Therefore, the ESPs play a direct role in the very specialized, integrated programming that goes beyond academic education and encompasses the social and emotional well-being of each student.

Our education support professionals employed in the MANSEF schools are to be recognized and appreciated. It is for these reasons that MANSEF respectfully requests a favorable report on HB1234, and we look forward to participating in the workgroup.

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