

Tracey Wright
1804 Alcan Dr
Silver Spring, MD 20902
February 13, 2023

Maryland House of Representatives
Re: HB 448

To the House Ways and Means Committee,

I am writing this testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 448 as the parent of a young adult and MCPS student with significant special needs. It is a travesty that teachers and therapists working in non-public special education schools are paid 20% to 40% less than those working in public schools. Their work is no less valuable. Further, the fact that students are referred to non-public schools because the public system cannot meet their needs, demonstrates exactly why these staff should be paid on par with special ed teachers at public schools. They are working with students who have the most significant needs and complex disorders.

My son has autism, learning disorder, OCD, and ADHD. He reads at a 2nd grade level and his math skills are at the 5th grade level. In sixth grade he was placed in a non-public special education school after several years of the public school not being able to meet his needs. He has required 1:1 support since and will finish this year with a Certificate of Completion.

The non-public special education school placement at Kennedy Krieger School was life-changing for him and for our family because for the first time, he began receiving specialized academic, behavior, speech, and mental health services. The teachers and therapists are highly trained and each day they perform a challenging task to educate neurodivergent students like my son, who has required years to learn basic concepts and who needs intensive positive behavior management to get through daily periods of extreme dysregulation. **Non-public special education teachers must be compensated fairly so they can be retained by their schools and continue to provide supports critical to families like mine.**

Sincerely,

Tracey Wright
Parent