

**Written testimony submitted to the Maryland House Ways and Means Committee
SB 735 - Workgroup to Study the Wages of Education Support Professionals
March 29, 2023**

SUPPORT

Chair Atterbeary and members of the committee, on behalf of the 20,000 members of the American Federation of Teachers – Maryland (AFT-MD), including the Baltimore Teachers Union (BTU), we ask for a favorable report on SB 735 - Workgroup to Study the Wages of Education Support Professionals.

This bill establishes a workgroup to study the wages of education support professionals (ESP) including bus drivers, cafeteria workers, office employees, and other positions that are vital to the education of Maryland's students.

The workgroup will determine the percentage of education support professionals in Maryland – who earn a living wage. In addition, to study whether increased wages may to attract and retain workers in ESP positions. This information will be provided to the General Assembly to inform what actions may be taken to improve conditions to

Since the pandemic, it has been difficult to recruit and retain people for ESP positions. Staff shortages are reported in school districts across Maryland. ESP provide essential services to our students including transportation, meals, classroom support, technical support, clean and safe classrooms, and other services that contribute to a positive learning environment.

School support staff are essential to the function of the education system. Teachers and students depend on them for their work and commitment. For too long, their work has been taken for granted. It is time they get the recognition they deserve including whether they have fair compensation. For these reasons, we ask for a favorable report on SB 735. Thank you.

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