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Budget and Taxation Committee
Chair, Capital Budget Subcommittee

Chair, Senate Democratic Caucus

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Craig J. Zucker
Senate Bill 735/ House Bill 1234 Workgroup to Study the Wages of Education Support
Professionals
Ways & Means Committee | Appropriations Committee
March 29, 2023
1:00PM
Position: Favorable with Amendments

Good afternoon, Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and distinguished members of the committee. It is my pleasure to testify today in **support of Senate Bill 735/House Bill 1234 - Workgroup to Study the Wages of Education Support Professionals.**

Senate Bill 735 passed the Senate with unanimous support in the same posture that this committee heard its cross-file, House Bill 1234, on March 14.

Education Support Professional (ESP) are essential to the school day and are the backbone of a safe, healthy, and supportive learning and working environment that must exist for educators and students to succeed. Last session, the General Assembly passed legislation to provide bonuses for ESP, however the workgroup to study these positions and their wages was amended out of the bill as session approached sine die.

The Maryland State Department of Education collected data on how many ESPs there are in the state and reported nearly 45,000 ESPs were eligible to receive a bonus, which came out to an average of \$179. Senate Bill 735 directs MSDE to create the study to investigate what percentage of ESPs in the state earn a living wage, study ways to increase wages to attract and retain these skilled workers – and report their findings and recommendations to the General Assembly.

It is imperative to study how many vacant ESP positions there are, their wages, and how we can support this important group that was excluded from the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 735. Thank you for your kind consideration.