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The Honorable Members of the House Committee

Maryland General Assembly, Annapolis, MD 21401

### **Testimony in Support of House Bill 1369 (HB1369) - Education - Minimum Wage for Education Support Professionals**

Hearing Date: March 05, 2025

Chairperson and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

My name is Maureen Wambui, and I am a proud Immigrant, Parent, Community advocate and resident of Legislative District 8 in Maryland. I am honored to submit testimony in **strong support** of House Bill 1369, which establishes a minimum wage of \$25.00 per hour for education support professionals employed by county boards of education in Maryland. This bill is a crucial step toward ensuring fair compensation for the dedicated staff who play a vital role in our public schools.

#### **Why HB1369 is Essential:**

##### **Recognizing the Value of Education Support Professionals**

Education support professionals, including paraprofessionals, custodians, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and administrative staff, are the backbone of our public school system. They ensure that students learn in a safe, clean, and well-managed environment. However, many of these professionals earn wages that do not reflect their essential contributions to student success.

- Increasing their wages to a livable rate will boost morale, reduce turnover, and attract more qualified professionals to serve our students.
- Without competitive wages, many staff members are forced to take multiple jobs or leave the education field entirely, creating instability in our schools.

##### **Addressing Economic Disparities**

- Many education support professionals struggle to afford basic necessities such as housing, healthcare, and childcare due to low wages.
- A \$25.00 per hour minimum wage ensures that these workers can support themselves and their families without needing additional assistance.

- This wage increase will help lift many educational support professionals out of poverty and reduce the financial strain on working families.

### **Improving the Quality of Education**

When support professionals are paid fairly, they can focus on their jobs without financial stress, leading to:

- Better student support in classrooms, cafeterias, and transportation services.
- Safer and healthier school environments with adequate staffing.
- Higher retention rates, meaning experienced staff remain in schools, benefiting students and educators alike.

### **Keeping Up with Inflation**

- HB1369 includes annual inflation adjustments, ensuring that wages keep pace with the rising cost of living.
- Without this adjustment, wage increases can become outdated, forcing support professionals into financial hardship once again.

HB1369 is a necessary investment in Maryland's education system. By compensating education support professionals, we are not just helping workers, we are strengthening our schools, supporting our students, and ensuring a higher quality of education for all.

I respectfully urge the committee to pass HB1369 to provide the wages our education support professionals rightfully deserve.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Wambui