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Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary, Delegate Delegate Bernice Mireku-North, Delegate Denise Roberts, Delegate Kent Roberson, Delegate Chao Wu, and Delegate Jessica Feldmark,

I am Alita-Geri Carter, the mother of two disabled children, a pediatric nurse practitioner, and the owner of Qualequity Access, LLC a consultancy that advocates for quality, equity, access, and accessibility in healthcare and education. I write to express my **support for House Bill 0504** with necessary **amendments** to address the significant **decrease in per-pupil funding**, which will have broad consequences for all students in Maryland's public schools but will **disproportionately impact students with disabilities and special education services**.

According to the US Department of Education's Dispute Resolution Dashboard, Maryland ranks **9th in the nation** for the **highest number of special education-related litigation, state complaints, and requests for mediation**. These disputes often stem from challenges in securing adequate supports and services for students with disabilities, an issue that would likely worsen with reduced funding per pupil.

Moreover, Maryland ranks **20th in the nation for reading proficiency**, according to a January 29, 2025, press release from Maryland Matters. This data underscores **systemic challenges** within our state's general and special education systems, which would only be exacerbated by further funding reductions.

Specifically, **Prince George's County** is one of the districts facing the greatest disparities. Data from the University of Wisconsin's Population Health Institute on school funding adequacy for 2024 shows that **Prince George's County would need to spend nearly an additional \$10,000 per pupil** to reach the U.S. average in student test scores. **A decrease in the target per-pupil foundation amount would only widen this gap and further disadvantage the state's most vulnerable students**.

While HB 0504 includes important provisions for advancing **educator recruitment and retention**, the **decline in per-pupil funding** risks undermining these efforts by straining school resources, reducing the availability of individualized supports, and **compromising**



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special education services mandated under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

For these reasons, I urge you to **amend Bill HB 0504 to ensure that per-pupil funding remains adequate and equitable**, especially for students with disabilities who rely on specialized services to access their education fully. Maryland must prioritize funding strategies that support **inclusive education, intervention programs, and evidence-based literacy initiatives** to improve outcomes for **all students**.

Thank you for your time and leadership on this critical issue. I appreciate your consideration and look forward to your support of amendments that will ensure Maryland's public schools can fulfill their mission to serve **every student equitably**.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I ask for a favorable disposition with amendment for this bill. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further and urge you to stand with Maryland families supporting education investments and impactful legislation.

Kind regards,

Alita-Geri Carter, RN, MSN, CPNP-PC, BCPA