

**CRAIG J. ZUCKER**  
*Legislative District 14*  
Montgomery County



James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 120  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3625  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3625  
Craig.Zucker@senate.state.md.us

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 764- Education - Minimum Wage for Education Support Professionals**  
**March 3rd, 2026**  
**1:30pm**  
**Position: Favorable**

Good afternoon, Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and distinguished members of the Budget and Taxation Committee. It is my pleasure to testify today in **support of Senate Bill 764- Education - Minimum Wage for Education Support Professionals.**

Educational Support Professionals (ESPs) are part of the foundation of our public school system. From administrative staff and custodians to bus drivers and paraeducators, these professionals create environments where teaching and learning can flourish. Their expertise ensures schools operate smoothly while supporting education at every level.

The General Assembly has previously recognized the critical role of ESPs. The FY23 budget appropriated \$8 million for local education agencies to issue bonuses to their education support professionals in FY2023. Additionally, the FY2024 budget also included \$1,000 bonuses for education support professionals. While these steps were important acknowledgments of the value of ESPs, more substantial action is needed. A recent Maryland State Department of Education survey revealed that nearly 80% of ESPs need a second job to make ends meet, and roughly 55% reported having a second job.

Senate Bill 764 addresses this challenge by establishing a \$25.00 per hour minimum wage for educational support professionals. Beginning July 1, 2028, and annually thereafter, the minimum wage would be adjusted to reflect inflation, ensuring that wages keep pace with the rising cost of living. The annual adjustment would be calculated by applying the prior fiscal year's inflation rate to the current minimum wage.

During the 2025 legislative session, this Committee included budget language directing the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to conduct a feasibility study on establishing a \$25 minimum wage for non-certificated ESPs. The study examined the number of ESPs by local school system and job classification, the number of vacancies, and the number of employees earning less than \$25 per hour. It also defined ESPs to

include non-supervisory positions in food service, transportation, custodial and maintenance services, skilled trades, student health services, clerical services, security services, and paraeducators or other student aides.

Building on that work, SB 764 requires MSDE to submit a report to the Governor and the General Assembly identifying the total cost of implementing the \$25 minimum wage by jurisdiction. The report, due on or before December 1, 2026, will provide the data necessary for the State and local school systems to responsibly plan and budget for implementation.

I recognize the fiscal challenges Maryland is facing, which is why this legislation is designed to be prospective and responsible. By passing Senate Bill 764, Maryland not only acknowledges the contributions of ESPs but takes a meaningful step toward ensuring fair wages for those who support our students every day. I respectfully request a **favorable report on Senate Bill 764**. Thank you for your consideration.