



February 27, 2026

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 765 – Education – Minimum Wage for Education Support Professionals

We respectfully urge the Budget and Taxation Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 765. Paraprofessionals are essential members of our public education and early childhood workforce. In systems like Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), paraprofessionals support students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and – critically – our youngest students in Pre-K classrooms. They provide one-on-one academic support, help manage classrooms, assist with behavioral and social-emotional needs, and ensure that students can fully access instruction. Quite simply, schools cannot function effectively without them.

Yet despite their critical responsibilities, many paraprofessionals earn wages that do not reflect the skill, patience, and expertise their roles require. In a high-cost community like Montgomery County, current wages make it difficult for paraprofessionals to afford housing, transportation, health care, and child care. This creates chronic turnover and vacancies, which disrupt student learning and place additional strain on teachers and school leaders. When paraprofessional positions go unfilled, students with the greatest needs often experience the greatest loss of support.

Due to required ratios as set in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, it is necessary for a paraprofessional to be in every Pre-K classroom. As we work to expand Pre-K, more paraprofessionals will be needed, but we don't even have enough as it is. The Blueprint is also requiring increasing credentials for paraprofessionals; higher educational requirements warrant increased compensation.

Establishing a minimum wage of \$25 per hour for paraprofessionals would be a meaningful step toward stabilizing this vital workforce. It would improve recruitment and retention – filling our current gap and helping us to meet future goals. This proposal is also about equity and dignity. Paraprofessionals are overwhelmingly women and disproportionately women of color. Ensuring a living wage affirms the value of their labor and acknowledges that those who dedicate their careers to supporting children should not struggle to meet their own basic needs. Stable, fairly compensated adults create stable learning environments for children.

It's important to note that this legislation will have impacts on the early childhood ecosystem. As wages increase in Local Education Agencies, more educators working in private child care providers will leave in favor of higher pay at their local public school system. If we are truly concerned about fair compensation for a valuable workforce, we must also long-term look towards increasing the compensation of ALL educators, including those in private child care programs.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Jahromi".

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The Montgomery County [Children's Opportunity Alliance](https://www.mocochildren.org) connects our community to build an equitable, accessible, high-quality, and sustainable early childhood system that narrows disparities and puts all young children on a path to reach their greatest potential.

