

SB 764 AFSCME Maryland Council 3_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Christian Gobel

Position: FAV



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Patrick Moran – President

**SB 764 – Education – Minimum Wage for Education Support Professionals
Budget and Taxation Committee
March 3, 2026**

FAVORABLE

AFSCME Maryland Council 3 supports Senate Bill 764. Senate Bill 764 establishes a minimum wage rate of \$25 per hour for education support professionals beginning July 1, 2028. The legislation also requires the Maryland State Department of Education to report to the Governor and General Assembly on or before December 1, 2026, on an estimate of the total cost of implementing a \$25 per hour minimum wage for education support professionals.

AFSCME Maryland Council 3 represents approximately 55,000 public service workers across varying levels of government including city, county, state, and higher education. Our Council is proud to represent thousands of K-12 school support staff across Maryland. AFSCME members are on the frontlines every day delivering critical public services our communities depend on.

School support staff perform essential functions every day for our public schools, and also, maintained critical school operations during the Covid-19 pandemic shutdown. School support staff transport students safely to and from school; they prepare meals, so students are well fed and prepared to learn; they keep our schools safe, clean, and well maintained; and they ensure administrative operations are executed in a timely manner. In short, our public education system is entirely dependent upon school support staff.

However, school support staff are not compensated at a level commensurate with the essential functions they provide to our public education system. Far too many school support staff are struggling to make ends meet, and as a result, school support staff positions remain difficult to fill, which creates unsustainable workloads on existing employees. According to analyses by the Maryland State Department of Education, 34% of ESPs earn less than \$25 per hour, and approximately 2,670 ESP positions were vacant, statewide. This data identifies both the number of ESPs who are struggling to make ends meet, while also illustrating the difficulty of recruiting and retaining individuals who are dedicated to careers in our school system. Senate Bill 764 will move our state in the right direction of providing competitive wages for school support staff, and in turn, attract more people into these essential positions.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on SB 764.

SB764- Senator Zucker- Senate.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Craig Zucker

Position: FAV

CRAIG J. ZUCKER
Legislative District 14
Montgomery County



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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 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.

BTU Testimony SB764 2026.pdf

Uploaded by: Cristina E Duncan Evans

Position: FAV



AFT 340 AFL-CIO
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Senate Bill 764 – Education – Minimum Wage for Education Support Professionals
Budget and Taxation Committee
March 3, 2026, 1pm

FAVORABLE

On behalf of the Baltimore Teachers Union, which proudly represents educators and school support staff in Baltimore City Public Schools, we respectfully urge a favorable report on SB764, establishing a \$25 per hour starting wage for all paraprofessionals and school-related personnel. Our union includes paraeducators, instructional assistants, school secretaries, bus transportation aides, and other essential support professionals. These employees are not ancillary to the educational mission — they are central to it.

Paraeducators and instructional assistants provide direct academic and behavioral support to students every day. They work one-on-one with children who have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), help implement behavior intervention plans, support literacy and math instruction in small groups, and assist teachers in managing inclusive classrooms. For many students with disabilities, a paraprofessional is the adult who ensures they can safely access instruction alongside their peers.

Bus transportation aides are often the first and last school representatives a child sees each day. They ensure students — including medically fragile students and those with significant disabilities — arrive safely to and from school. They de-escalate behavioral challenges in confined spaces, manage medical or mobility needs, and provide reassurance to anxious children. Their role is critical to student safety.

School secretaries are the operational backbone of our schools. They manage attendance systems, respond to families in crisis, coordinate substitute coverage, maintain compliance records, and serve as the front-facing connection between families and the school community. In many cases, they are triaging student health concerns, supporting homeless families with documentation, and responding to emergencies — all while keeping the school functioning smoothly.

These roles require skill, emotional intelligence, patience, and deep commitment to children. They are especially critical in high-poverty districts where students may need additional social-emotional support, and where schools rely on strong relationships with families and community partners.

Proper compensation is not simply about fairness to workers — it is about ensuring that the adults entrusted with caring for our young people are able to remain in the profession. It is about building a stable, skilled workforce that reflects and supports the communities we serve.

Students with special needs, in particular, rely on continuity and trusted relationships. High turnover among support staff can be deeply destabilizing for children who depend on consistency to thrive.

Maryland has made historic investments in public education. Those investments must include the full team of professionals who make learning possible. A \$25 per hour starting wage sends a clear message that we value the people who feed, transport, support, and care for our students every single day.

For these reasons, the Baltimore Teachers Union respectfully urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 764.

SB 764 – Minimum Wage for Education Support Profes

Uploaded by: Denise Riley

Position: FAV



A Union of Professionals
AFT-Maryland

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Kenya Campbell
PRESIDENT

LaBrina Hopkins
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Written Testimony to the Senate Budget and Taxation
SB 764 – Education – Minimum Wage for Education Support Professionals
March 3, 2026

FAVORABLE

Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the Committee: AFT Maryland supports SB 764, which establishes a minimum wage of \$25 per hour for our state’s education support professionals (ESPs).

As the backbone of our public education system, ESPs, including paraeducators, bus drivers, custodians, and food service workers, they ensure that our schools are safe, clean, and conducive to learning. Despite their essential roles, a significant number of these professionals currently earn wages that fall far below a livable standard in Maryland.

When we fail to provide a competitive, livable wage for support staff, we see higher turnover rates and vacant positions that directly impact student outcomes and school safety. By mandating a \$25 per hour minimum wage, we will help stabilize the workforce, reduce the need for constant recruitment and training, and allow experienced professionals to remain in the careers they love.

Passing SB 764 sends a clear message that Maryland values all educators, not just through words, but through fair and equitable compensation. We urge a favorable report on SB 764.

SB764_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Donna Edwards

Position: FAV



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

Affiliated with the National AFL-CIO

Donna S. Edwards
President

Samuel Epps, IV
Secretary-Treasurer

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SB 764 - Education - Minimum Wage for Education Support Professionals

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

February 3, 2026

SUPPORT

Donna S. Edwards

Maryland State & D.C. AFL-CIO

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 764. On behalf of our 700 affiliated unions, I offer the following comments.

SB 764 establishes a minimum wage of \$25 per hour for Education Support Professionals (ESPs). As our state continues to grapple with growing staff shortages, it is important that we ensure these individuals have the resources they need and the compensation they deserve.

ESPs play an essential role in the everyday operations of our schools and in students' lives both inside and outside the classroom. Personnel such as paraeducators, custodians, cafeteria workers, administrative staff, bus drivers, and security and technology staff, keep our schools running smoothly and efficiently all while keeping students safe and healthy.

Currently, the state minimum wage is \$15 per hour without a minimum wage rate for ESPs. This fails to keep pace with the rising cost of living and rising cost of goods, leaving them struggling to provide for their families. SB 764 addresses this disparity by recognizing the invaluable work of these dedicated professionals and ensuring they receive fair compensation for their work.

This legislation furthers our state's commitment to investing in our schools, students and communities.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable vote on SB 764.



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www.mddclabor.org



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instagram.com/md_dc_aflcio

COA_Written Testimony_SB765 Education - Minimum Wa

Uploaded by: Laura Jahromi

Position: FAV



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".

Laura Jahromi, Manager, Strategic Initiatives
The Montgomery County Children's Opportunity Alliance
1801 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852 | 301-450-1871 |
laura@mocochildren.org

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.



SB764_MSEA_Lemle_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Paul Lemle

Position: FAV

**Favorable
Senate Bill 764
Education-Minimum Wage for Education Support Professionals**

**Budget and Taxation Committee
March 03, 2026**

**Paul Lemle
MSEA President**

The Maryland State Education Association strongly supports Senate Bill 764. This legislation would require local school boards to pay education support professionals (ESPs) a minimum wage of \$25 per hour by July 1, 2028.

MSEA represents 76,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools and community colleges, teaching and supporting our almost 900,000 K-12 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA represents more than 44 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Education support professionals are the backbone of our schools. They touch every aspect of daily operations, yet nearly 60% of education support staff working in Maryland public schools sit below the threshold of a living wage. They show up every day, dedicating themselves to the wellbeing and betterment of our students, families, and communities.

They are the school bus drivers who rise before dawn to safely transport our children—driving thousands of miles each year in all weather conditions—carefully navigating back roads and busy highways to make sure every student arrives safely. They are the first smile a child sees in the morning and the last reassuring presence at the end of the day, carrying the precious cargo of our community's future.

They are the front office professionals who calm anxious parents, check students in with care, handle emergencies, ensure thousands of dollars of school receipts each year are accounted for, and keep our schools running smoothly behind the scenes. They are the food service staff who make sure no child starts the day hungry—serving breakfast and lunch with dignity, warmth, and a watchful eye for the student who may need a little extra kindness.



They are the paraprofessionals supporting some of our most vulnerable special education students—teaching them to read their first words, helping them write their names, patiently reinforcing lessons again and again until it clicks. They lift students in and out of wheelchairs, assist with mobility and personal care, manage behavioral crises, and ensure safety at every moment. They celebrate small victories that mean the world: a new word spoken, a step taken independently, a breakthrough after weeks of effort.

They are the custodial staff who arrive long before the first bell or stay long after the last activity ends—sanitizing classrooms, fixing broken fixtures, clearing snow and ice, and ensuring our buildings are clean, healthy, and safe places to learn. And they do all this tirelessly—often working second or even third jobs just to support their own families—because they believe in our children and in public education.

These dedicated professionals are not just staff. They are caregivers, mentors, protectors, and the steady hands that hold our schools together every single day. If we believe that “liberty and equality” apply to everyone, then no worker should have to work more than one job to afford the basics of housing, food, clothing, transportation, healthcare, and much more. One job should be enough for the critical work they do for our students.

We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on Senate Bill 764.

SEIU Local 500 - Testimony in Support of SB 764 20

Uploaded by: Travis Simon

Position: FAV



Testimony - SB 764, Education – Minimum Wage for Education Support Professionals
Favorable
Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
March 3, 2026
Travis B. Simon
Executive Director, SEIU Local 500

Honorable Chairman Guzzone & Members of the Senate Budget & Taxation Committee:

SEIU Local 500 represents thousands of education support professionals (ESPs) across Maryland — paraeducators, food service workers, bus drivers, custodians, clerical staff, and other frontline employees who make our schools run every single day. They are the adults who open buildings before sunrise, who ensure classrooms are clean and safe, who help students with disabilities succeed, who feed children nutritious meals, and who keep schools functioning smoothly.

Yet too many of these essential workers cannot afford to live in the very communities they serve.

Senate Bill 764 establishes a minimum wage of \$25 per hour for education support professionals by July 1, 2028. This is not a luxury. It is a matter of dignity, stability, and common sense. The people who make our schools run should only need one job to provide for their families. No education support professional working full-time in Maryland’s public schools should be forced to work nights, weekends, or second and third jobs just to make ends meet. Yet, this is the reality for many.

When school employees are stretched thin financially, physically, and emotionally, it affects students. High turnover, staffing shortages, and burnout disrupt school communities and undermine the very goals of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The Blueprint was designed to transform Maryland’s education system and elevate student outcomes. That transformation cannot happen if the workforce that supports instruction every day is underpaid and undervalued.

Educational support professionals are not peripheral to the Blueprint — they are central stakeholders in its success. From implementing community school strategies to supporting special education, improving school climate, keeping students safe, and ensuring operational excellence, ESPs are foundational to achieving the Blueprint's ambitious goals. Leaving them behind in compensation undermines the State's investment in educational excellence.

This legislation also provides time for thoughtful fiscal planning, including a required cost analysis by the State Department of Education. It reflects a responsible path forward while making clear that Maryland values the people who keep our public schools running.

Maryland has committed to building a world-class education system. That commitment must include ensuring that the workers who support our students can support their own families with a single, full-time job.

For these reasons, SEIU Local 500 respectfully urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 764. Thank you to Senator Zucker for leading on this issue on behalf of educational support professionals in Maryland.

In closing, we wish to make it clear, we are going to continue to push this issue until it is over the finish line on behalf of the thousands of educational support professionals across Maryland who need it to happen. We would ask that you take it up as serious an issue as the ESP who is considering how to feed their family tonight.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Testimony in support with amendments of SB0764 - M

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FWA

SB0764_RichardKaplowitz_FWA

03/03/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz

Frederick, MD 21703

**TESTIMONY ON SB#0764- POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH
AMENDMENTS**

Education – Minimum Wage for Education Support Professionals

TO: Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and members of the Budget and Taxation Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support with amendments of SB#0764, **Education – Minimum Wage for Education Support Professionals**

While I agree that we are underpaying education support professionals throughout the state of Maryland this bill's one fits all needs modification. The cost of living varies in different areas of Maryland as does the ability of jurisdictions to fully fund this mandate for increasing wages.

I favor amending the bill to provide flexibility on the minimum wage based on prevailing wage scales and costs of living in a jurisdiction. Additionally, a formula for state assistance funding for this change needs to be determined to avoid disruption in jurisdictions budgets for their overall school funding needs.

This bill will establish a minimum wage rate of at least \$25 per hour to be paid by county boards of education to certain education support professionals beginning on July 1, 2028; and requiring the State Department of Education to report to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before December 1, 2026, on an estimate of the total cost of implementing a \$25 per hour minimum wage for education support professionals.

Once that data on the total cost of implementation of the worthy goals within this bill to each jurisdiction's school systems the amount of the minimum wage should be adjusted to a wage scale appropriate to the situation within each jurisdiction.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable with amendments report on SB#0764.

SB0764 -- Education – Minimum Wage for Education S

Uploaded by: Brian Levine

Position: UNF



Senate Bill 764 -- Education – Minimum Wage for Education Support Professionals
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
March 3, 2026
Oppose

The Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce (MCCC), the voice of business in Metro Maryland, opposes Senate Bill 764 -- *Education - Minimum Wage for Education Support Professionals*.

Senate Bill 764 requires local school boards to pay education support professionals (ESPs) a minimum wage of \$25 per hour by July 1, 2028. “Education support professionals” are defined as noncertificated public school employees designated as part of a nonsupervisory bargaining unit.

While well-intentioned, MCCC contends that decisions regarding compensation for education support professionals (ESPs) are best made at the local level by school systems that understand their unique workforce needs, budget constraints, and community priorities. Mandating a statewide minimum wage of \$25 per hour for ESPs would increase personnel costs for local governments, many of which are already managing tight budgets and competing demands. Such a requirement reduces local flexibility and may ultimately force school systems to make difficult trade-offs in staffing or educational services. Additionally, MCCC supports allowing the market to dictate pay and benefits as a more effective approach than imposing statewide wage mandates.

An additional unintended consequence of this bill would be its impact on the broader labor market dynamics affecting childcare, a sector already experiencing workforce shortages. Many childcare workers leave for higher-paying jobs in public school systems, reducing the availability of quality childcare and early childhood education for working families. By further widening the wage gap between school system positions and childcare providers, this bill risks accelerating that trend. Reduced childcare access is a growing challenge that negatively affects labor force participation, particularly among women.

For these reasons, the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce opposes Senate Bill 764 and respectfully requests an unfavorable report.

The Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce (MCCC), on behalf of its members, champions the growth of business opportunities, strategic infrastructure investments, and a strong workforce to position Metro Maryland as a premier regional, national, and global business location. Established in 1959, MCCC is an independent, non-profit membership organization.

Brian Levine | Vice President of Government Affairs
Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce
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Rockville, Maryland 20850
301-738-0015 | www.mcccmd.com

SB 764_HB 1205_ Education – Minimum Wage for Educ

Uploaded by: Trudy Tibbals

Position: UNF

SB 764/HB 1205: Education – Minimum Wage for Education Support Professionals:
Please vote to **OPPOSE** this bill.

Dear Budget & Taxation Committee and Ways & Means Committee:

I am writing to strongly urge you to **OPPOSE SB 764/HB 1205**. These bills would mandate that county boards of education pay education support professionals (non-certificated, nonsupervisory school staff like custodians, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and paraeducators) at least \$25 per hour starting July 1, 2028, with a required state report on the massive implementation costs by December 1, 2026.

While valuing the important work of school support staff, this aggressive wage mandate is fiscally irresponsible and unsustainable. Maryland public schools already face severe budget constraints, teacher shortages, and rising operational costs amid inflation and enrollment pressures. Forcing a jump to \$25/hour—far above current state minimum wage trends and many local pay scales—would impose enormous unfunded or underfunded obligations on county boards, leading to:

- Drastic cuts to other education priorities (class sizes, programs, supplies, or teacher pay).
- Tax increases or borrowing to cover the shortfall.
- Job reductions or outsourcing in support roles to control costs.
- Disproportionate impacts on rural/suburban districts where funding is tighter than in wealthier areas.

The required cost report will likely reveal billions in statewide expenses, yet the bill pushes forward without viable funding mechanisms or a phase-in tied to state aid increases. This top-down mandate bypasses local negotiations and collective bargaining realities, risking disruptions to school operations and student services.

Maryland should support fair wages through targeted state aid, incentives, or negotiated agreements—not rigid, one-size-fits-all mandates that strain local budgets and could harm the very students and staff they aim to help.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask you to **vote against SB 764/HB 1205** and oppose this unfunded, burdensome wage requirement on public schools.

Thank you for your attention to this critical education funding matter.

Sincerely,

Trudy Tibbals