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March 9, 2026

SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 863 – Prince George's County Special Education Service Delivery, Transparency, and Accountability Act

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and Environment

POSITION: Support

RE: Statement of Support

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, Senator Washington, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

I am Alita-Geri Carter, the owner of Qualequity Access, LLC., a consultancy grounded in data-driven transformation that advocates for quality, equity, access, and accessibility in healthcare and education. I am the mother of two children with disabilities, a former practicing nursing practitioner, special education parent advocate, and public health servant.

I am writing to express my strong support for **Senate Bill 863**. As a parent who was forced to flee Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS), I have experienced firsthand the systemic failures this legislation seeks to rectify. My children were denied the essential services, supports, and accommodations clearly demonstrated by their data. Seeking justice within the current system was impossible, as the burden of proof rests heavily on families who often lack specialized knowledge of special education law and complex documentation requirements. The Maryland State Department of Education also failed my family and many others by failing to do its job as an oversight and governance entity for the Individual with Disabilities Education Act as was proven by multiple substantiations I have obtained against it.

SB 863 provides a critical framework for accountability that is long overdue for families in Prince George's County.

Key Provisions for Reform

This bill addresses several of the most significant barriers to student success:

- **Full-Time Status for One-to-One Aides:** Beginning in the 2027-2028 school year, the bill requires PGCPS to provide full-time salaries and benefits to one-to-one student aides. This is essential for reducing the high turnover and vacancy rates that currently leave students without their required support.
- **Mandatory Comprehensive Auditing:** The State Department of Education must hire a third-party auditor to review PGCPS special education data from fiscal years 2021 through 2025. This audit will specifically examine missed services, compensatory service backlogs, and the impact of vacancies on student outcomes.
- **Transparency and Reporting:** The County Superintendent must provide quarterly updates for at least 24 months regarding the delivery of IEP service minutes and the status of one-to-one aide assignments.



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- **Professional Development:** The bill mandates quarterly professional development for all employees providing special education services to ensure they are equipped to meet student needs.

Addressing Conflicts of Interest

It is also imperative to address the environment in which this legislation is considered. Many members of the Education Committee receive substantial donations from education associations, including teacher and administrator unions and board of education associations. When these financial ties result in a failure to advocate for students and families, it creates a clear conflict of interest that has gone unchecked for too long. This committee must prioritize the constitutional right to a "uniform system of public schools" over the interests of political donors.

Conclusion

SB 863 is an emergency measure designed to provide immediate preservation of public health and safety for our most vulnerable students. It offers a path toward transparency through "heatmaps" of noncompliance and centralized tracking dashboards. Prince George's County Public Schools has historically had the highest number of special education and civil right disability discrimination complaints in the state of Maryland year over year for at least five years. The system consistently fails to meet the state and federal requirements for serving and protecting disabled students. After years of advocating for a safe, free appropriate public education that my family and everyone other family is guaranteed, I beg that you use your power and legislate this change. A system that is non-compliant will not follow policy, procedures, or corrective action unless forced to. This is a fact that is driven by objective and publicly available data.

I urge this committee to issue a **favorable report** on Senate Bill 863 to ensure that no other family has to flee their home, school system, or support system to secure the education their children are legally entitled to receive.

Respectfully Submitted,
Alita-Geri Carter, MSN, DNP-C, CPNP-PC, BCPA, PMP
Resident, Howard County, MD