



Testimony - SB 904, Education - Public Schools - Service Contracts and Professional
Development

Favorable

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

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Honorable Chairman Feldman & Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee:

SEIU Local 500 strongly supports Senate Bill 904. Our union represents tens of thousands of educational support professionals in Montgomery County, including paraeducators, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, building service staff, and other frontline school employees who keep our public schools running safely and effectively every day.

Senate Bill 904 addresses two longstanding issues facing education support professionals: the unchecked expansion of service contracts that displace public employees, and the lack of consistent, paid, high-quality professional development for the workers who are closest to students.

First, SB 904 brings transparency and accountability to decisions to outsource school services. Requiring county boards of education to justify service contracts, demonstrate meaningful consideration of in-house alternatives, and show real cost savings—exclusive of wage and benefit cuts—protects both workers and taxpayers. The bill's requirement for a formal assistance plan for affected employees, including placement efforts and advance notice, is a critical safeguard for school staff whose livelihoods are often treated as an afterthought in contracting decisions.

Second, SB 904 makes a long-overdue investment in paraeducators and other education support professionals through the creation of a statewide system of paid, in-person professional development during the workday. These workers are essential

partners in student learning, health, safety, and behavior support, yet they are too often denied the training and time they need to succeed. By requiring at least two days of high-quality professional development each year—and by ensuring that training includes crisis de-escalation, safe physical restraint, collaboration with teachers, and job-specific skills—this bill directly improves working conditions and student outcomes.

SEIU Local 500 also strongly supports the bill's clear statement that nothing in this law may diminish existing collective bargaining agreements or employment benefits. This respect for workers' rights and negotiated protections is essential.

Educational support professionals have historically been excluded from decision-making and underinvested in, despite their critical role in our schools. Senate Bill 904 begins to correct that imbalance by valuing their labor, protecting their jobs, and investing in their professional growth.

For these reasons, SEIU Local 500 respectfully urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 904.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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