

EDUCATION ADVOCACY COALITION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Senate Bill 904: Education – Public Schools – Service Contracts and Professional Development

March 4, 2026

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT

The Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities (EAC) is a coalition of nearly 50 organizations and individuals committed to advancing education policies that protect and support Maryland students with disabilities. The EAC supports with amendment Senate Bill 904, which would require county boards of education to submit certain service contracts to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and would require MSDE to develop a new system of in-person professional development for paraeducators and education support professionals. By June 2028, paid professional development would occur during the hiring and onboarding process and two days each school year.

EAC members have vast experience representing or supporting students with disabilities and their families throughout the state and recognize that paraeducators and education support professionals play essential roles in supporting students, especially students with disabilities. Education support professionals can fulfill a range of roles in schools, from providing students with one-to-one assistance and assisting with feeding, toileting, mobility, and other activities essential to student safety and participation throughout the school day to reducing staff/student ratios, providing redirection, and reinforcing behavior intervention plans.

For students whose individualized education programs (IEPs) require the assistance of a “dedicated aide,” “1:1 support,” or other education support professional, lack of training can result in stalled progress, or even regression for students with disabilities if they do not receive the personal, behavior or instructional support they need to be successful in school. For students experiencing behavioral or emotional crisis, the inclusion of crisis intervention training and deescalation training for education support professionals is critical. Additionally, in many cases, support personnel ensure the safety of the student while the child is in the school building or during transportation to and from school.

The EAC recognizes the value that paraeducators and education support professionals bring to the classroom and the benefit they provide to students who need individual

support to access and benefit from their education. For this reason, we support SB904 with the following suggested amendment: **Define “paraeducator” and “education support professional.”**

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Respectfully submitted,

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