

Letter of Support SB 863.pdf

Uploaded by: Alita-Geri Carter

Position: FAV



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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

Letter In Favor of SB863.pdf

Uploaded by: Gloria Perea

Position: FAV

For the Witness Sign up,

Good afternoon, everyone. I am in favor of Prince George's County Special Education Service Delivery, Transportation, and Accountability Act SB863. It is an honor for me to have my voice and testimony considered. I am the mother of four students who have attended or are currently attending the PGCPs education system. For the past four years, I have witnessed that the counselors and staff "dedicated" to facilitating the school experience for students with special needs do not always do their jobs correctly. I don't know if it's due to a lack of training, a lack of resources, discrimination, racism, or a combination of all of these. A student with diagnosed ADHD, who has all the paperwork provided by her doctor and whose prescribed medication the school is aware she is taking, has been systematically denied the benefits to which she is entitled based on her diagnosis. When she has gone to her counselors, who could grant her access to these benefits, they simply tell her, "You don't have enough ADHD for us to give you these benefits." As a result, she is now potentially going to lose her right to graduate from high school, with no one caring about the triple effort she makes every day to complete her studies. I also recognize that there isn't enough access to information for parents to find solutions that benefit everyone. I'm convinced that equal access to education will help us create a stronger country. Thank you for listening.

- Gloria Perea

SB863 - Public Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Lien Hoang

Position: FAV

ALONZO T. WASHINGTON
Legislative District 22
Prince George's County

Finance Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 11, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Maryland State Senate
Annapolis, Maryland

Re: SB 863 – Prince George’s County Special Education Service Delivery, Transparency, and Accountability Act

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

I respectfully submit this testimony in support of Senate Bill 863, the Prince George’s County Special Education Service Delivery, Transparency, and Accountability Act.

This bill is about one core promise: when a child with a disability has an IEP, the services in that IEP must be delivered—consistently, on time, and with the appropriate staffing. Families in Prince George’s County should not have to fight through repeated meetings, complaints, or due process filings just to secure what the law already guarantees.

SB 863 takes a practical, accountable approach. Beginning in the 2027–2028 school year, it requires the school system to fund one-to-one student aide roles as full-time positions with salary and benefits—so these critical supports are stable and not treated as temporary stopgaps. It requires quarterly updates for at least 24 months with clear metrics on IEP service delivery, unfilled one-to-one assignments, vacancy and turnover, and compensatory services owed and completed—so the public can see whether the system is improving and MSDE can certify sustained compliance based on objective thresholds. It also strengthens capacity through required professional development training in special education services.

Finally, SB 863 ensures independent oversight by requiring MSDE to contract for a third-party audit of special education operations in Prince George’s County Public Schools for fiscal years 2021 through 2025, followed by a corrective action and strategic plan, with transparency and consequences if required records are not produced.

This is an emergency bill with a defined timeline and a clear purpose: improve service delivery now, restore trust with families, and strengthen outcomes for students with disabilities.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 863.

With regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alonzo T. Washington', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Alonzo T. Washington
Maryland State Senator

OpalFoster_Support Letter_SB863_3_9_26.pdf

Uploaded by: Opal Foster

Position: FAV



March 9, 2026

Dear Members of the Maryland General Assembly,

On behalf of **Parents of Children with Down Syndrome (PODS) of Prince George's County, Maryland**, I write to express our **strong and urgent support for Senate Bill 863 – the Prince George's County Special Education Service Delivery, Transparency, and Accountability Act**.

As President of PODS of PGC, I represent families whose children depend on consistent special education services to learn, grow, and thrive. For too many families in Prince George's County, those services are inconsistent, delayed, or missing entirely. Senate Bill 863 is a critical step toward fixing these long-standing issues and restoring trust for families of students with disabilities.

This legislation will benefit the disability community in three critical ways:

First, it increases transparency and accountability. Families deserve to know whether their child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) services are being delivered. Quarterly updates on service delivery, vacancies, and compensatory services will provide essential visibility and accountability.

Second, it strengthens oversight and long-term improvement. The independent audit of special education services will help identify systemic gaps and guide meaningful solutions to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

Finally, it strengthens support for students who require one-to-one aides. Many students with disabilities rely on these aides to safely access their education. By requiring funding for full-time salaries and benefits for one-to-one aides, this bill helps stabilize a workforce that our students depend on every day.

Families in our community are not asking for special treatment—we are asking for our children to receive the services they are legally entitled to under federal law. Every missed service represents lost opportunities for learning and development that cannot easily be recovered.

For the Down syndrome community and the broader disability community in Prince George's County, **Senate Bill 863 represents accountability, transparency, and hope.**

I respectfully urge you to support and pass Senate Bill 863. Our children cannot wait.

Sincerely,

Opal Foster

President

Parents of Children with Down Syndrome (PODS) of Prince George's County, MD

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Uploaded by: Tanisha Wooten

Position: FAV

Supporting Statement for SB863

As a concerned parent and advocate for students with disabilities in Prince George's County, I strongly support the passage of SB863, the Prince George's County Special Education Service Delivery, Transparency, and Accountability Act. Families across our county have experienced years of instability, missed services, unfilled one-to-one aide positions, and a lack of transparency that has directly harmed our children's educational progress and emotional well-being. This bill finally provides the structural oversight, accountability, and resources needed to correct these long-standing failures.

SB863 addresses the core issues families have raised for years. By requiring full-time salaries and benefits for one-to-one aides, the bill stabilizes a workforce that has historically suffered from high turnover and chronic vacancies. Our children cannot learn, grow, or remain safe when essential support positions remain unfilled for weeks or months at a time. This bill ensures that the individuals who support our most vulnerable students are treated as valued professionals, not disposable labor.

The quarterly reporting requirements are equally critical. For too long, families have been left in the dark about service delivery, compensatory services owed, and staffing shortages. SB863 mandates transparent, data-driven updates so that parents, the Board of Education, and the Maryland State Department of Education can monitor progress and intervene when necessary. Transparency is not optional-it is the foundation of trust.

Additionally, the requirement for annual professional development ensures that staff who support students with disabilities are properly trained and equipped. Our children deserve educators and aides who understand their needs and can deliver services with fidelity.

Finally, the independent audit is essential. Families have repeatedly raised concerns about missed

Supporting Statement for SB863

services, budget lapses, and chronic noncompliance. An external review will provide the clarity and accountability needed to rebuild a system that has failed too many children for too long.

SB863 is not just a policy-it is a lifeline for families who have been fighting for basic compliance with federal law. It is a step toward restoring dignity, safety, and educational opportunity for thousands of students with disabilities in Prince George's County. I urge the General Assembly to pass this bill without delay.

Position_ Favorable with Amendments.pdf

Uploaded by: Alicia Baines

Position: FWA

March 9, 2026

Position: Favorable with Amendments

SB863 – Prince George’s County Special Education Service Delivery, Transparency, and Accountability Act

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is **Alicia Reneé**, founder of **The IEP Files**, a special education advocacy organization that supports families navigating the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). I am also a **Prince George’s County parent**.

I submit this testimony **in support of SB863 with amendments**.

I want to begin by stating plainly why legislation like this matters. **My own child was denied a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in Prince George’s County Public Schools**. That denial was not theoretical. It resulted in missed services, academic harm, and years of advocacy simply to enforce rights that already exist under federal law.

Unfortunately, my family’s experience is not isolated. Through my work as a special education advocate, I see the same patterns across cases throughout this district: services written into Individualized Education Programs that are not delivered, one-to-one aide positions left vacant for extended periods, compensatory services delayed or never calculated, and parents forced into complaints or due process simply to enforce what the law already requires.

It is important to understand that the issue is not that schools are incapable of writing IEPs. **In Prince George’s County, we do not have an IEP writing problem. We have an implementation problem.**

A compliant document on paper does not educate a child. **Implementation is the law**. When the services written in an IEP are not delivered with fidelity, students with disabilities lose instructional time, lose behavioral supports, and lose access to the education that federal law guarantees them.

That is why SB863 matters.

The bill introduces critical transparency measures by requiring reporting on key indicators of special education service delivery, including the percentage of IEP service minutes delivered, the number of students requiring one-to-one aides, vacancy and turnover rates for those positions, and the number of students owed compensatory services. These metrics begin to answer a question that families across the district have been asking for years: **Are students actually receiving the services written into their IEPs?**

The requirement for a **third-party audit of the Prince George’s County Public Schools special education system** is also significant. A comprehensive review of complaint patterns,

SB863 – Prince George’s County Special Education Service Delivery, Transparency, and Accountability Act

due process filings, staffing shortages, financial trends, and student outcomes can provide policymakers with the first full picture of how systemic service delivery issues affect students with disabilities across the district.

Additionally, requiring that one-to-one student aides be funded with **full-time salary and benefits** addresses one of the most persistent operational failures in special education delivery. When these positions remain vacant or unstable, the consequences are immediate. Students lose access to behavioral supports, safety plans break down, and the services outlined in their IEPs cannot be implemented as designed.

While these provisions represent meaningful progress, **transparency alone will not ensure compliance with IDEA**. For that reason, amendments are necessary to ensure this legislation leads to real change for students.

First, when reporting identifies missed IEP services, the law should require a **standardized process for calculating and delivering compensatory education**. Families should not have to initiate complaints or due process cases simply to receive services that were already owed to their children.

Second, the audit and corrective action process should include **independent oversight and legislative reporting** to ensure that findings translate into meaningful corrective action and system improvement.

Finally, the transparency and reporting structures established by this bill should not disappear after three years. Sustained transparency is essential for long-term accountability and continuous improvement in special education service delivery.

Quality IEPs require more than well-written documents. **They require full-fidelity implementation—services delivered as written, monitored through data, and adjusted when students are not making progress**. When that process breaks down, students with disabilities bear the consequences.

SB863 begins to address a system where the gap between written plans and delivered services has too often gone unexamined. With targeted amendments that strengthen enforcement and oversight, this bill can move Prince George’s County toward a special education system where accountability, transparency, and fidelity of implementation are the standard—not the exception.

No child’s access to education should depend on how hard their parent is willing or able to fight.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Alicia Renéé, MHA, CSM, CSPO

Founder, The IEP Files | Special Education Advocate
Prince George’s County, Maryland

Written Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0863 w

Uploaded by: Eboni Burch

Position: FWA

Written Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0863 with Recommended Amendments

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Eboni Burch, a Prince George's County resident, mental health professional, and parent of a child with disabilities enrolled in a special education program within Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS). I support Senate Bill 863 and respectfully offer several amendments to strengthen the bill and ensure it meaningfully improves services for students with disabilities.

Through my experience navigating the special education system, I have observed gaps between the supports outlined in Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and what is implemented in practice. Many classrooms lack sufficient certified special educators and trained staff to implement IEPs with fidelity. As a result, students may not consistently receive the services and accommodations to which they are legally entitled.

Another concern is the reliance on classroom aides to collect ABC (Antecedent–Behavior–Consequence) behavioral data without appropriate training. While ABC data can be valuable for identifying triggers and informing behavioral plans, inaccurate or inconsistent data collection can lead to ineffective interventions. Independent oversight or third-party auditing of behavioral data practices would help ensure reliability and accountability.

Students with disabilities benefit most when staff can recognize triggers, identify early warning signs of dysregulation, and implement proactive supports. Without proper training, responses often become reactive rather than preventative, which can negatively affect both the student and the classroom environment.

To strengthen SB 863 and prevent unintended consequences, I respectfully recommend the following amendments:

Recommended Amendments

1. Safeguard Against Withholding Funds Due to Staffing Turnover

The bill should include safeguards preventing the restriction or withholding of funds from school districts due to high turnover among dedicated aides or paraprofessionals. These positions frequently experience high turnover due to compensation and workload challenges. Penalizing districts financially could unintentionally reduce services for students with disabilities.

2. Medicaid Reimbursement for Aide Services

The bill should encourage or require school systems to pursue Medicaid reimbursement for eligible dedicated aide and behavioral support services. Leveraging Medicaid funding can help sustain staffing and expand services without placing additional financial strain on school systems.

3. Independent Behavioral Training

Professional development related to behavioral intervention and de-escalation should be provided by qualified mental health professionals or behavioral specialists, preferably external to the local school district. Training should focus on evidence-based behavioral supports, crisis prevention, and working effectively with neurodivergent students in educational environments.

4. Expand Coverage to All Aides

The bill should apply to all classroom aides and paraprofessionals supporting students with disabilities, not only one-on-one dedicated aides. Many aides rotate among students or support the entire classroom and play a direct role in implementing behavioral and instructional supports.

5. Clarify Roles of Support Personnel

The legislation should clearly distinguish the roles of dedicated aides, paraprofessionals, and Crisis Intervention Resource Teachers (CIRTs). Dedicated aides are often asked to perform multiple duties beyond their training. The bill should define these roles, outline appropriate secondary duties, and require training aligned with those responsibilities.

For students requiring intensive behavioral support, the legislation should also encourage school systems to employ or contract Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs) or similar certified professionals to implement evidence-based behavioral interventions under qualified supervision.

Conclusion

Students with disabilities deserve classrooms staffed with trained professionals who can implement IEPs effectively and provide proactive behavioral supports. Senate Bill 863 represents an important step toward improving accountability and student outcomes.

With the amendments outlined above, this legislation can better support school systems while ensuring that vulnerable students receive the services they need.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a **favorable report on Senate Bill 863 with the recommended amendments.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Eboni Burch, Psy.D.

Prince George's County Resident

SB863.pdf

Uploaded by: Lisa Wilson

Position: FWA

Lisa Wilson, Parent of a disabled PGCPS student

17202 Madrillon Way

Accokeek, MD 20607

Position: Favorable With Amendment

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 863, Emergency Bill, Proposed by Senators A. Washington, Charles, and Muse

Assigned to: Education, Energy, and the Environment

As a parent of a disabled student with a one-to-one aide, I can attest to the difference this accommodation can make in the life of a disabled child. For example, a child with autism is likely to have a severe executive functioning deficit. This impacts the part of the brain in which organization and planning occur. Notwithstanding that autism is likely to be accompanied by cooccurring mental health disorders, such as ADHD. A child stricken with multiple disorders requires the highest level of support, such as a one-to-one aide to navigate the educational environment and curriculum. **AMENDMENT:** The funds to be included in the budget should include a separate fund for substitute teachers. In my case, when the one-to-one aides were absent, my son dithered without adequate support.

Requiring the County Superintendent to develop and offer certain professional development training for employees who provide special educational services. I can attest that PGCPS fails to provide training with a legal framework to employees who provide special educational services. Disabled children are covered by IDEA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and Title II of the ADA. Until employees receive adequate training on the intersectionality of the aforementioned federal legislation protecting this vulnerable student population. Based on the number of substantiated complaints filed by parents with MSDE, this training appears to be necessary and may reduce the violative conduct of PGCPS. **AMENDMENT:** Annual legal update training for employees who provide special educational services.

Requiring the State Department of Education to hire a third-party auditor to conduct certain audits of the Department of Special Education in PGCPS for certain fiscal years.

AMENDMENT: Should the results of the audit reveal criminal activity, the appropriate referrals will be made to the OIG without delay.

INDEPENDENT AMENDMENT: PGCPs shall abolish the position of Associate Superintendent of Special Education. The Director of Special Education shall possess a juris doctorate. The Director of Special Education shall report directly to the Chief of Staff.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. I am available to meet with your staff at any time.

SB863 Testimony_Dr Robin Brown.pdf

Uploaded by: Johntel Greene

Position: UNF



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Superintendent

March 11, 2026

Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

Senate Bill 863 - Prince George's County Special Education Service Delivery, Transparency, and Accountability Act

From: Dr. Robin Brown, Prince George's County Public Schools Board of Education
District 5

Position: OPPOSE

Contact: Dr. Robin Brown, Board of Education District 5 Robin.Brown@pgcps.org |
Johntel Greene, Government Relations Johntel@goodgov.ai

Dear Chair Brian Feldman, Vice Chair Cheryl Kagan, and esteemed members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 863. I come before you not only as an elected member of the Prince George's County Board of Education representing District 5, but also as a parent of two honor students who attend Bowie High School and Charles H. Flowers High School. My children have walked the halls of PGCPs elementary, middle, and high schools, and I have sat in the same parent meetings, attended the same PTSO events, and had the same conversations at Booster Club that so many families in our community have. This work is personal for me.

I want to begin by affirming Senator Washington's commitment to students with disabilities and his urgency to address their needs. That urgency is something I share deeply. Through my work mentoring students with "College Bound," my experience as a substitute teacher, and my years of community advocacy in Prince George's County, I have seen firsthand what is at stake for families navigating the special education system. I hear from those families. I attend their meetings. And I carry their voices into this boardroom and into this chamber. But I must respectfully ask this committee to oppose Senate Bill 863, for the following reasons.

First, I want to recognize and celebrate the progress PGCPs has made. It would be easy, and politically convenient, to only tell a story of failure. But that would not be honest, and it would not serve our families. The truth is that Prince George's County Public Schools have been responsive, we have been accelerating our successes and addressing our deficits. We have been engaged. When PGCPs was designated a high-risk grantee under IDEA we worked hand-in-hand with the Maryland State Department of Education on a comprehensive corrective action plan that addresses staffing, IEP monitoring, professional development, and transparent progress reporting. The Superintendent's proposed budget includes \$27 million in new funding dedicated to special education, and as of March 10th, all 441 authorized dedicated aide positions are filled.



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I also want to highlight something that does not always make the news: this Board conducted public hearings specifically to bring community voices—including families of students with special needs—into the budget and planning process. As someone who has spent years organizing communities, I know that real accountability begins with listening to people. We have been listening.

Second, the Board of Education is already exercising robust oversight. The oversight structure that SB 863 seeks to create largely duplicates what the Board is already doing in partnership with MSDE. Legislating parallel structures from Annapolis does not strengthen accountability. It fragments it. It creates confusion about who is in charge and, worse, it signals to families that we do not trust the people they voted to lead their school system.

Third, this bill diverts resources away from the very students it seeks to help. The fiscal note estimates \$466,300 in state costs and up to \$20 million in unfunded local costs. That is money that could hire special educators, expand compensatory services, and retain the one-to-one aides that families in my district ask me about at every school event I attend. When I am at Bowie High School or Charles H. Flowers, parents do not ask me for more reports. They ask me for more resources to reach their children. SB 863 would mandate up to \$20 million in additional unfunded local costs to convert temporary aide positions to full-time employees with benefits - without providing any funding to do so. It is a funding crisis waiting to happen, and our most vulnerable students would pay the price.

Finally, I ask the committee to trust the community-rooted process already underway. I understand the difference between accountability that builds capacity and compliance that consumes it. The corrective action plan under MSDE oversight is the right framework. It should be strengthened, resourced, and supported—not replaced by a parallel legislative mandate that will overwhelm the very staff delivering services to children.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 863.

Thank you.

Dr. Robin Brown
Board Member, District 5
Prince George's County Public Schools Board of Education

SB863 Testimony_Dr Zakiya.pdf

Uploaded by: Johntel Greene

Position: UNF



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Secretary/Treasurer
Dr. Shawn Joseph
Superintendent

March 11, 2026

Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

Senate Bill 863 - Prince George's County Special Education Service Delivery, Transparency, and Accountability Act

From: Dr. Zakiya Goins-McCants, Prince George's County Public Schools Board of Education District 8

Position: OPPOSE

Contact: Dr. Zakiya Goins-McCants, Board of Education District 5
dist8.boardmember@pgcps.org | Johntel Greene, Government Relations
Johntel@goodgov.ai

Dear Chair Brian Feldman, Vice Chair Cheryl Kagan, and esteemed members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I want to be transparent about who I am and why I'm here.

I grew up in Prince George's County. I was a student in these schools. I came back and taught in these schools. I've sat across the table from parents trying to navigate the special education system and felt the frustration they feel. I ran for this Board because I believed—and still believe—that our children deserve better, and that the people closest to the problem are best positioned to fix it. That is why I must respectfully ask this committee to oppose Senate Bill 863.

I share Senator Washington's sense of urgency. But urgency without the right intervention is not accountability—it's noise. And I say that as someone who has spent a career in education using data to drive real improvement. The question is not whether PGCPs should be held accountable. The question is whether this bill is the right tool to do it.

It is not.

The accountability structures SB 863 seeks to create largely duplicate work already underway. PGCPs is operating under a corrective action plan in partnership with MSDE. All 441 authorized dedicated aide positions are currently filled. The Superintendent's proposed budget includes \$27 million in new special education funding. The Board held public hearings specifically to center community voices in that process. These are not excuses—they are measurable results from a Board that is doing its job.



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What SB 863 would actually do is impose up to \$15.4 million in new local costs and divert staff time from delivering services to producing reports. As a data professional, I understand the value of transparency—but data collection for its own sake, without a plan to act on it, does not help a single child receive their IEP services. The families I talk to in District 8 are not asking for more audits. They are asking for more action.

The \$20 million in additional unfunded mandates to convert temporary aide positions to permanent roles would force us to cut programs elsewhere—affecting every student, including students with disabilities in inclusive settings. We do not have a vacancy problem. This bill would create a funding crisis.

Prince George's County is doing this work. I am on this Board to make sure we keep doing it—with rigor, with community input, and with the resources our students actually need. I ask the General Assembly to be a partner in that—not a parallel structure that undermines it.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 863.

Thank you.

Dr. Zaikya Goints-McCants
Board Member, District
Prince George's County Public Schools Board of Education

SB0863 Testimony Shawn Joseph SB (1).pdf

Uploaded by: PGCPs General

Position: UNF



PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

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March 11, 2026

Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

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District 2

Senate Bill 863 - Prince George's County Special Education Service Delivery, Transparency, and Accountability Act

Board Members
Dr. Tiffini Andorful
District 1

From: Dr. Shawn Joseph, Interim Superintendent, Prince George's County Public Schools

Pamela Boozer-Strother, MBA, CAE
District 3

Position: OPPOSE

Aimee Olivo
District 4

Chair Brian Feldman, Vice Chair Cheryl Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee,

Robin Brown
District 5

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Dr. Phelton C. Moss
District 7

I want to begin by acknowledging Senator Washington's commitment to students with disabilities. I share that commitment fully. Every child in Prince George's County deserves the services and support required under federal law.

Zakyia Goins-McCants
District 8

VACANT
District 9

However, I respectfully ask the committee to oppose Senate Bill 863 for three reasons.

Student Member
Erioluwa Ajakaye

First, accountability already exists.

Secretary/Treasurer
Dr. Shawn Joseph
Superintendent

Prince George's County Public Schools is currently operating under enhanced oversight from the Maryland State Department of Education. We have been designated a high-risk grantee under IDEA and are implementing a comprehensive corrective action plan that includes staffing improvements, IEP monitoring, professional development, and regular progress reporting to the state.

In short, the accountability this legislation seeks to create is already in place and actively being monitored.

Second, this bill creates duplication at a time when we need focus.

Our district is already undergoing multiple audits and monitoring processes related to special education. Adding another state-mandated audit and quarterly updates would not accelerate improvement. It would redirect staff time from serving students toward responding to additional layers of compliance.



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Right now, what our educators and administrators need most is the ability to focus on implementing the corrective plan that is already underway.

Third, this legislation creates a significant unfunded mandate.

In my proposed budget, I have already requested \$27 million in additional funding to strengthen special education services. This legislation would require roughly \$20 million more without additional funding to provide employee benefits. As of March 10, 2026, all 441 authorized dedicated aid positions are filled. There is no urgency for this unfunded mandate at this time.

When mandates come without resources, school systems are forced into impossible choices—cutting other programs in order to comply.

That does not strengthen services for students. It strains them.

Finally, I want the committee to know that we take this work seriously. We are hiring staff, expanding professional development, and working closely with the Maryland State Department of Education to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

The responsible course now is to allow the corrective process already underway to work.

Members of the committee, accountability is already here, the work is already underway, our vacancies are filled, and our students cannot afford for us to pause progress in order to prove that we are making it.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask for an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 863.

Thank you,

Dr. Shawn Joseph
Interim Superintendent
Prince George's County Public Schools

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District 6

Board Vice Chair

Jonathan Briggs, M.Ed. MLS
District 2

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Dr. Tiffini Andorful
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Pamela Boozer-Strother, MBA, CAE
District 3

Aimee Olivo
District 4

Robin Brown
District 5

Dr. Phelton C. Moss
District 7

Zakya Goins-McCants
District 8

VACANT
District 9

Student Member

Erioluwa Ajakaye

Secretary/Treasurer

Dr. Shawn Joseph
Superintendent

SB863 Testimony_Dr Phelton Moss.pdf

Uploaded by: Phelton Moss

Position: UNF



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March 11, 2026

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Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

Board Members
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District 1

Senate Bill 863 - Prince George's County Special Education Service Delivery, Transparency, and Accountability Act

From: Dr. Phelton Moss, Prince George's County Public Schools Board of Education

Position: OPPOSE

Pamela Boozer-Strother, MBA, CAE
District 3

Contact: Dr. Phelton Moss, Chair, Policy and Governance Committee
Phelton.Moss@pgcps.org | Johntel Greene, Government Relations Johntel@goodgov.ai

Aimee Olivo
District 4

Dear Chair Brian Feldman, Vice Chair Cheryl Kagan, and esteemed members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee,

Robin Brown
District 5

Dr. Phelton C. Moss
District 7

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I want to acknowledge Senator Washington's advocacy on behalf of students with disabilities. As a Board member representing District 7, the well-being of every student—including those with Individualized Education Programs—is a top priority for me and for this Board.

Zakyia Goins-McCants
District 8

VACANT
District 9

However, I respectfully ask the committee to oppose Senate Bill 863 for the following reasons.

Student Member
Erioluwa Ajakaye

Secretary/Treasurer
Dr. Shawn Joseph
Superintendent

First, the Board of Education is already exercising its oversight role. As an elected Board member, I take my governance responsibility seriously. The Board has been actively engaged in monitoring special education service delivery and holding the administration accountable. PGcps is currently designated a high-risk grantee under IDEA, and the Board is working in close coordination with the Maryland State Department of Education on a comprehensive corrective action plan that includes staffing improvements, IEP monitoring, professional development, and regular progress reporting.

The oversight mechanisms this bill seeks to establish largely mirror work the Board is already doing. Legislating these requirements from Annapolis undermines the authority of the locally elected Board to govern its own school system.

Second, this bill diverts resources away from the students it intends to help.

PGcps staff are currently focused on executing the corrective action plan and delivering direct services to students with disabilities. Layering an additional state-mandated audit and new quarterly reporting requirements on top of existing compliance obligations will pull staff away from classrooms and into paperwork.



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Erioluwa Ajakaye

Secretary/Treasurer

Dr. Shawn Joseph
Superintendent

As a Board member who hears directly from parents and educators in District 7, I can tell you that families want to see more services reaching their children—not more reports about the services their children are not receiving. The fiscal note estimates \$466,300 in state costs and up to \$20million in local costs. These are dollars that could be invested in hiring special educators, expanding compensatory services, and retaining qualified one-to-one aides.

Third, the unfunded mandate threatens progress already underway. The Board is already working on the Superintendent's proposed budget that includes \$27 million in additional funding for special education. We held a number of public hearings related to the town hall to ensure that community voices were a part of the decision-making process, including stakeholders in special education. This is part of our commitment to improvement. SB 863 would impose roughly \$20 million in additional unfunded costs to convert temporary aide positions to full-time employees with benefits—without providing the resources to do so.

As of March 10, 2026, all 441 authorized dedicated aide positions are filled. This bill does not solve a vacancy crisis—it creates a funding crisis. Unfunded mandates force school systems to cut other programs in order to comply, harming all students, including students with disabilities who participate in inclusive settings.

Finally, I urge the committee to trust the process that is already working. The corrective action plan under MSDE oversight is producing measurable results. The Board is committed to transparency and has supported the administration in making special education data publicly available. Rather than creating a parallel accountability structure through legislation, the General Assembly should partner with the Board and MSDE to strengthen the existing framework.

Members of the committee, I share Senator Washington's commitment to students and families in special education and his urgency to address the challenges we do have. But urgency without alignment creates confusion, not progress. Prince George's County Public Schools is doing this work. We are not asking for less accountability—we are asking for the space and the resources to deliver on the accountability that already exists.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask for an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 863.

Thank you,
Dr. Phelton Moss
Prince George's County Public Schools

SB0863 - State Board & MSDE - LOI.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Stefan Redding-Lallinger

Position: INFO

TO: Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment

BILL: SB0863 – Prince George’s County Special Education Service Delivery, Transparency, and Accountability Act

DATE: March 11, 2026

POSITION: Letter of Information

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is providing information regarding SB0863, which would require the Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS) Superintendent (or a designee) to provide quarterly updates to MSDE on certain aspects of special education services and budgeting, including data on students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) who require one-to-one aides, the delivery of required services and compensatory services, staffing vacancy and turnover rates for one-to-one aides, and other related items.

The bulk of the impact for implementation would fall on PGCPS. However, the bill would also require the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to contract with a third-party vendor to conduct an audit of PGCPS covering fiscal years 2021 through 2025, examining areas such as the delivery of special education services and compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), complaints and due process filings, staffing and workforce matters, financial and procurement practices, and special education outcomes.

Currently, MSDE maintains an established general supervision system that overlaps in part with the requirements outlined in the proposed legislation and, through this system, regularly monitors each LEA in the areas identified in the Bill. In particular, the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has identified eight components that states must include in their general supervision system. They are:

- Integrated monitoring activities;
- Data on processes and results;
- The State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR);
- Fiscal management;
- Effective dispute resolution;
- Targeted technical assistance and professional development;
- Policies, procedures, and practices resulting in effective implementation; and
- Improvement, correction, incentives, and sanctions.

As part of its general supervision system, MSDE, Division of Special Education (DSE) has developed Tiers of General Supervision and Performance Support. Each LEA is assigned to one of four tiers, Universal, Targeted,

Focused, or Intensive, based on trend performance on compliance and results data, fiscal monitoring, and timely correction of noncompliance, including noncompliance identified through dispute resolution processes.

For the current 2025-2026 school year, PGCPs has been assigned to the Focused Tier of General Supervision and Performance Support. LEAs assigned to the Focused Tier receive comprehensive monitoring from MSDE every other year. PGCPs is scheduled to undergo comprehensive monitoring in March 2026. LEAs assigned to the Focused Tier also receive more intensive technical assistance from MSDE, such as meetings with MSDE and its Division of Special Education specialists to review data and co-develop plans to improve compliance and student outcomes.

MSDE identified PGCPs as a high-risk grantee for its 2024–2025 and 2025–2026 IDEA, Part B funding due to persistent areas of noncompliance with federal and state special education requirements. MSDE has worked with PGCPs to address these issues through targeted action plans, professional learning for staff, and implementation of corrective measures. Special conditions were placed on Part B funds, and PGCPs was required to hire key personnel and collaborate with an MSDE-appointed technical assistance team. Since that time, PGCPs has made substantial progress in staffing, including reducing special education teacher vacancies from 242 to 81 and speech-language pathologist vacancies from 50 to 0.

MSDE recognizes that while significant progress has been made in addressing systemic noncompliance and improving special education services in PGCPs, further work is needed to ensure all students with disabilities receive the services to which they are entitled. MSDE will continue to monitor and support PGCPs through its established oversight and technical assistance processes.

For further information, please contact Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of Government Affairs, at 443-571-5461 or Laurel.Cratsley@maryland.gov.

SB863_Informational_TSmith.pdf

Uploaded by: Theresa Smith

Position: INFO

TO: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
FROM: Theresa Smith, Special Education Advocate
DATE: March 9, 2026
BILL NO: SB863 (Prince George's County Special Education Service Delivery, Transparency, and Accountability Act)



POSITION: Informational

Statement of Intent: I am providing informational testimony on SB863 to highlight critical implementation risks at the intersection of IDEA requirements, state labor requirements, and fiscal realities. While I fully support the bill's intent to provide transparency and fair compensation for staff delivering special education services, the following technical and regulatory items require clarification to ensure the bill achieves its goals without compromising service fidelity.

1. Service Delivery, Classifications, and IEP Fidelity

- **Inclusivity of Aide Classifications (Shared vs. 1:1):** SB863 specifically references "one-to-one student aides." However, Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) utilizes a variety of support models, including shared aides. As written, the bill omits these critical staff members. If the intent is to professionalize the workforce, the legislation should be inclusive of all specialized aide classifications. If the exclusion of shared aides is intentional, a clear legislative rationale must be provided as to why they are denied the same protections.
- **Full-Time Conversion vs. IEP Hours:** A significant risk exists for students whose Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) mandate aide support for less than a full-time pay period. It must be clear on how the district will manage this "full-time" status without artificially padding a child's mandated hours or leaving an aide underutilized.
- **Scope of Duties:** Without specific regulatory language defining "secondary assignments," there is a risk of mission creep. To maintain the safety and fidelity of the IEP, it must be clarified whether a "one-to-one" aide can be pulled for general school duties (e.g., lunch monitor, hall duty).
- **Service Continuity During Accrued Leave:** Transitioning aides to full-time status with benefits means they will appropriately accrue and utilize leave. While the daily mechanics of substitute coverage fall under district operations, this legislation must acknowledge the anticipated impact on service delivery. A framework or reporting requirement must be established regarding service continuity and mandatory family notification when a dedicated aide is absent, as this remains a critical safety and compliance issue for children with high-intensity needs.

2. Intersection with Labor Requirements and Retention

- **IDEA vs. Labor Alignment:** There is a potential risk that student service hours could be manipulated solely to satisfy employment schedules rather than educational needs.

- **Workload Premiums:** A competitive base salary is a necessary baseline. Additionally, to ensure retention in high-intensity special education settings, the bill should consider incentive differentials to recognize the unique physical and emotional demands of the role beyond a standard flat rate.

3. Fiscal Sustainability and Student Safety Nets

- **Funding Protection & Withholding Clauses:** Section 4-406(f)(2)(ii) states that the State Superintendent may withhold funds if the school system fails to comply with record production. It is the position of this testimony that the lack of administrative compliance regarding reporting related to the aides should never be the sole reason for withholding funds from the state. There should be a regulatory "safety net" to ensure punitive measures against the district do not inadvertently result in the loss of direct services, staffing, or IDEA-mandated supports for children.
- **Medicaid Maximization:** Technical clarity is needed on whether School-Based Medicaid Recovery to fund these salary increases, and how proposed federal Medicaid cuts might impact this local funding stream.

4. Accountability and Transparency

- **Compensatory Service Reporting:** Clarity is required on the scope of quarterly reporting. It is unclear if the reporting of compensatory service hours will cover all areas of the IEP, or only those specifically tied to the dedicated aide.

5. Professional Development and System-Wide Training

- **State-Level Standardization:** While the push for mandated professional training is commendable, the State Board of Education—not individual local school districts—should be required to determine the core competencies, the frequency of this training, and the required staff to obtain it.
- **Inclusive Training Scope:** Furthermore, these training requirements should be standardized for *all* educational and operational staff, not exclusively special education personnel. Students with IEPs interface with every aspect of the school environment, from transportation and cafeteria staff to general education teachers and administration. Leaving these critical training standards to the discretion of a specific school district creates dangerous inconsistencies and fails to equip the broader school community with the tools needed to support our most vulnerable populations.

Effective advocacy for Prince George's County families requires that legislation be as technically sound as it is well-intentioned. Addressing these regulatory and fiscal gaps will strengthen the final language of the bill and protect our students.

Thank you for your leadership and time.
Theresa Smith