

**Favorable
House Bill 1205
Education-Minimum Wage for Education Support Professionals**

**Ways and Means Committee
Appropriations Committee
March 11, 2026**

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The Maryland State Education Association strongly supports House Bill 1205. 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 House Bill 1205.