

CRAIG J. ZUCKER
Legislative District 14
Montgomery County



James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 120
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3625
800-492-7122 Ext. 3625
Craig.Zucker@senate.state.md.us

Budget and Taxation Committee
Chair, Capital Budget Subcommittee

Chair, Senate Democratic Caucus

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Craig J. Zucker
Senate Bill 904/House Bill 1254 - Education - Public Schools - Professional Development
April 1, 2026
1:00 pm
Position: Favorable

Good afternoon, Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and distinguished members of the Ways and Means Committee. It is my pleasure to testify in support of **Senate Bill 904 - Education - Public Schools - Professional Development**. I would like to thank Vice Chair Feldmark for sponsoring the cross-file, HB 1254, and for her leadership on this important issue. Senate Bill 904 has been amended to focus exclusively on establishing a paid professional development system for paraeducators and other education support professionals (ESPs).

Educational Support Professionals (ESPs) are the foundation of our public school system. From administrative staff and custodians to bus drivers and paraeducators, these professionals create environments where teaching and learning can flourish. Their expertise ensures schools operate smoothly while supporting education at every level.

Paraeducators and other ESPs benefit greatly from in-person training, which helps them build the skills and knowledge needed to meet the diverse needs of students. This bill ensures access to at least two days of professional development each school year, providing opportunities for learning and growth. Importantly, this training is paid and occurs during the school day, recognizing the value of their time and contributions while supporting ongoing professional development.

SB 904 directs the Maryland State Department of Education to design and develop this system by July 1, 2027. In designing the system, the Department will consult with county boards and nonprofit organizations with expertise in supporting ESPs, ensuring the program meets the needs of both staff and students.

Professional development strengthens the skills of paraeducators and ESPs and supports the students they teach. I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 904. Thank you for your consideration.