



SB904 Education – Public Schools – Professional Development

Position: Favorable

April 1, 2026

MAREE is a statewide alliance of education advocacy, civil rights, and community-based organizations working to ensure every Black and Brown student in Maryland gets the high-quality public education they are owed. SB 904 advances that mission by investing in the school professionals who work closest to students every day — paraeducators and education support professionals — and by establishing stronger accountability measures when school districts seek to outsource their work.

Paraeducators and education support professionals are the backbone of Maryland's public schools. They work alongside classroom teachers, support students with disabilities, manage school buildings, serve food in cafeterias, and drive school buses. In many of Maryland's high-need schools, they are often the adults who know students best — who notice when something is wrong, who build the relationships that keep kids in school. And they are, overwhelmingly, workers of color serving communities of color.

Yet for too long, these professionals have been among the least invested-in members of the school workforce. They frequently receive little to no paid, structured professional development — and when training does exist, it is often scheduled outside of school hours, without compensation, treating their growth as an afterthought rather than a priority. MAREE is committed to a public education system that is equitable and free from policies and practices rooted in systemic and structural racism. Chronically underinvesting in the professional development of a majority-Black and -Brown workforce is precisely the kind of structural inequity this bill begins to correct.

The bill has two important components. First, it directs the State Department of Education to design and develop, by July 1, 2027, a new system of professional development for paraeducators and education support professionals that is paid and occurs during weekday school hours. This is significant — paid, in-school-hours training treats these workers as the professionals they are. The bill's General Assembly findings affirm that in-person training during hiring and onboarding benefits these workers, with a stated intent to expand such training to at least two days of high-quality professional development per school year.

The substance of the training required is equally important. The new system must include training for paraeducators and teachers to work as collaborative teams to improve student outcomes; training for education support professionals on student health, safety, and learning environments; training on safe physical restraint; crisis prevention and de-escalation; and job skills training tailored to specific professional groups. Taken together, this is a meaningful, comprehensive investment in a workforce that is directly responsible for the daily wellbeing of Maryland's Black and Brown students.

The bill also wisely requires MSDE to consult with county boards and nonprofit organizations experienced in supporting education support professionals — including the Maryland State Education Association — when developing the new system. Community-informed design leads to more relevant, effective, and lasting outcomes. The bill's second component addresses school service contracts — procurement arrangements where a county board outsources school services to a private contractor. These contracts frequently affect custodial, cafeteria, transportation, and other support staff, disproportionately displacing workers of color from stable public sector employment.

SB 904 establishes meaningful accountability before a county board can proceed with a service contract. Boards must demonstrate they have formally considered alternatives, including reorganization of services. They must show at least 20% cost savings exclusive of any savings achieved simply by cutting employee pay or benefits — closing a loophole that has too often been used to justify outsourcing on the backs of the lowest-paid workers. And they must submit a formal plan of assistance for employees adversely affected, including efforts to place workers in vacant positions, provisions for contractor hiring of displaced employees, and advance notice to those affected. These are commonsense protections. They do not prohibit service contracts — they simply require boards to demonstrate that outsourcing is genuinely in the public interest, not just a mechanism to reduce labor costs for workers who can least afford it.

SB 904 passed the Senate 43–0. This unanimity reflects broad, bipartisan recognition that Maryland's education support workforce deserves to be treated with dignity and invested in — and that the students they serve deserve better than a system that treats the adults who care for them as expendable. By investing in Black and Brown students' education and success, we create a stronger future for all of Maryland. Investing in the professionals who serve those students every day is inseparable from that commitment. MAREE urges this Committee to report SB 904 **favorably**.

peace & truth,
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