



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony: HB1205 – Education – Minimum Wage for Education Support Professionals
Committee: Ways and Means
Hearing Date: March 11, 2026
Position: Favorable

Good afternoon, Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and esteemed members of the Ways and Means Committee. For the record, my name is Delegate Greg Wims, presenting House Bill 1205 - Education - Minimum Wage for Education Support Professionals.

Education Support Professionals, or ESPs, are essential to a functioning school system. They include the staff who greet families at the front desk, the bus drivers who transport students to and from school, the paraeducators and aides who support students in and out of the classroom, and the administrative and janitorial staff that ensure daily operations run smoothly so teachers can teach and students can learn. When these roles are understaffed or underpaid, the impact is immediate. Bus routes run late, classrooms lose critical support, buildings face maintenance backlogs, and learning time is disrupted.

I appreciate the steps taken in recent years by the general assembly to recognize the value of ESPs, including one-time bonuses in prior budgets. Those actions mattered, but they were temporary, and many ESPs still struggle to keep up with the cost of living. Too many of the workers who care for our students and keep schools open are forced to take on additional jobs simply to make ends meet. HB 1205 responds with a long term, predictable wage standard that respects their work and supports workforce stability.

As outlined in the bill, beginning July 1, 2028, each county board must pay ESPs at least \$25.00 per hour. To ensure implementation is planned and budgeted appropriately, the bill also requires the Maryland State Department of Education to submit, by December 1, 2026, a report to the Governor and the General Assembly estimating the total cost of implementation, with estimates broken down by local school system. This approach gives the State and local boards the time and information they need to plan effectively.

The bill is also narrowly focused on the intended workforce. HB1205 sets a statewide floor for these essential positions while preserving local flexibility in how school systems structure pay above that floor and manage implementation details. The State Board may adopt regulations as needed to carry out the law.

Maryland's students benefit when schools are fully staffed with an experienced, stable workforce. A \$25 minimum wage helps improve recruitment and retention, reduces turnover costs, strengthens day-to-day school operations, and supports the students who rely most on consistent services like transportation, school meals, and classroom assistance. HB1205 is a straightforward commitment. If we depend on ESPs every day to support student learning and keep schools open and safe, we must guarantee a wage which reflects that responsibility.

I respectfully ask for a favorable report on House Bill 1205. Thank you for your consideration.

