



Testimony - HB 1254, Education - Public Schools - Service Contracts and Professional
Development
Favorable
House Ways & Means Committee
March 4, 2026
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Honorable Chairwoman Wilkins & Members of the House Ways & Means Committee:

SEIU Local 500 strongly supports House Bill 1254. Our union represents tens of thousands of educational support professionals in Montgomery County, including paraeducators, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, building service staff, and other frontline school employees who keep our public schools running safely and effectively every day.

House Bill 1254 addresses two longstanding issues facing education support professionals: the unchecked expansion of service contracts that displace public employees, and the lack of consistent, paid, high-quality professional development for the workers who are closest to students.

First, HB 1254 brings transparency and accountability to decisions to outsource school services. Requiring county boards of education to justify service contracts, demonstrate meaningful consideration of in-house alternatives, and show real cost savings—exclusive of wage and benefit cuts—protects both workers and taxpayers. The bill's requirement for a formal assistance plan for affected employees, including placement efforts and advance notice, is a critical safeguard for school staff whose livelihoods are often treated as an afterthought in contracting decisions.

Second, HB 1254 makes a long-overdue investment in paraeducators and other education support professionals through the creation of a statewide system of paid, in-person professional development during the workday. These workers are essential partners in student learning, health, safety, and behavior support, yet they are too often

denied the training and time they need to succeed. By requiring at least two days of high-quality professional development each year—and by ensuring that training includes crisis de-escalation, safe physical restraint, collaboration with teachers, and job-specific skills—this bill directly improves working conditions and student outcomes.

SEIU Local 500 also strongly supports the bill's clear statement that nothing in this law may diminish existing collective bargaining agreements or employment benefits. This respect for workers' rights and negotiated protections is essential.

Educational support professionals have historically been excluded from decision-making and underinvested in, despite their critical role in our schools. House Bill 1254 begins to correct that imbalance by valuing their labor, protecting their jobs, and investing in their professional growth.

For these reasons, SEIU Local 500 respectfully urges a favorable report on House Bill 1254.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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