



A Union of Professionals
AFT-Maryland

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**Written Testimony from American Federation of Teachers-Maryland
SB 831 – State Operating Budget – Step Increases for State Employees – Reporting
Before the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
March 9, 2022
SUPPORT**

My name is Shawn J McKay, and I am an employee of the Baltimore City Public School System, working for the past 21 years as a special education paraeducator. I also am The Vice Chair of the PSRP chapter of the BTU, and a member at large of the AFT-Maryland. On behalf of the BTU and AFT-Maryland, I am asking for a favorable report to SB831, the bill that would form a workgroup to study the wages and compensation packages to the Education Support Personnel who are so vital to the education of Maryland's students.

Members of the committee, it is important that you recognize and appreciate the work I, along with my fellow paraeducators and support personnel, do in order to be sure the students at Baltimore City schools have the best educational outcomes. In my 21 years as a paraeducator I have worked at 6 different schools in the city. This is what a typical day looks like for me: I come in clean down the desk to prepare for in class breakfast and collaborate with the teacher for a few minutes to plan the day. The it is time to receive our students from the busses and assist the students with taking off coats and teaching them to hang their things up. Next, breakfast is served, and I begin teaching how to hold a spoon and open their items. After that, we clean up and do toileting, all before instruction can begin. Next, we start our morning instruction, and after about an hour in half we go back to toileting our students which can take up to 30 to 45 mins. Then we move into small groups teaching language arts and writing, which includes how to hold a pencil. On some days we have to do the total instruction due to the fact the teacher is in a meeting that could take up to 2 to three hours. This is just a small portion of what a paraeducator does daily.

If enacted, this bill would be a step in the right direction towards the just compensation towards paraeducators and support personnel and recognizing the value of the work of the numerous different support personnel are engaged in on a daily basis. First, it would create a commission that would research the type of work and compensation levels for educational support staff in different counties across the state, and report back their findings to the legislature. In addition, the bill calls for the state to provide bonuses to education support personnel of up to \$1000. These bonuses can be used to help attract and retain vital staff that have been leaving the education ranks over the past few years due to the pandemic emergency.

Members of the committee, for too long the work I and my fellow education support professionals have done for years for Maryland's children has gone unrecognized and unappreciated. Yet without the work of the education support staff in our state's public classrooms, our public schools would not be able to provide Maryland's students with the education they need. Again, AFT-Maryland and BTU call for a favorable report for SB831. Thank you for your time, have a safe and pleasant afternoon.