

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 831
Education Support Professionals – Workgroup and Bonus**

**Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
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1:00 PM**

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President, Calvert Association of Educational Support Staff**

Greetings Chair Guzzone and Honorable Members of the Budget & Tax Committee. My name is Stacy Tayman and I am an education support professional (ESP) in the Calvert County Public Schools system. Today, I am providing testimony in support of SB 831, a bill that will provide not only a bonus to ESPs but work to find a long-term solution to low wages and issues of retention.

I have served in administrative support and clerical positions with the Calvert County Public School Systems for 25 years. I am currently eligible for retirement in December of 2024, but when that date arrives, I will not be able to retire on my 25-year contribution to MSRAI.

Staffing shortages systemwide are causing other staff to discard their responsibilities to cover other vacancies. Instructional Assistants are being pulled from their duties to cover for teachers but are not paid anywhere near a teacher salary. Newly hired instructional assistants with a bachelor's degree earn less than \$25,500. A conditional teacher, with the same education, earns \$39,000. A new teacher, with the same education plus a teacher certificate, earns \$50,500. However, the instructional assistants are used as viable substitutions for absent teachers. In varying amounts, Calvert and other counties have support coverage that pays an additional \$14 per hour when coverage is for 90 minutes or more in any given day. That's an acknowledgement that ESPs, as employees, are more valuable when attached to a teacher designation.



Building service workers returned to buildings well before the rest of the staff when little was known about the coronavirus, in order to ensure the safe return of our students. A beginning building service worker earns approximately \$32,500, but are charged with disinfecting, understanding cleaning protocols as related to blood, bodily fluids, etc.

System wide, turnover is prevalent, which contributes to a severe lack in the continuity of services. Several thousands of dollars are lost each year as a result of employee turnover – posting, interviewing, onboard, training, and retraining. If pay was higher, positions would be more highly sought and longer retention could be realized.

Education support professionals are the foundation of every school day. We are an intricate web of professionals who hold our school systems together. We provide services that keep students safe. It is time to invest in the infrastructure that keeps schools functioning. The cracks in this foundation have been patched for too long. For all these reasons, I think it is imperative that we find a solution to retain and attract ESPs.

I kindly ask the committee for a favorable vote on SB 831.