



DATE: February 8, 2023 **COMMITTEE:** Senate Budget and Taxation
BILL NO: Senate Bill 311
BILL TITLE: Nonpublic Education - Special Education Placements - Renaming and Teacher Salaries
(Teacher Pay Parity Act)
POSITION: Support

Kennedy Krieger Institute supports Senate Bill 311 - Nonpublic Education - Special Education Placements - Renaming and Teacher Salaries (Teacher Pay Parity Act).

Bill Summary:

Senate Bill 311 changes the terminology of “nonpublic educational program” to “special education placement.” Additionally, the legislation requires the State and certain counties to pay the costs of salaries and bonuses for teachers at special education placements.

Background:

Kennedy Krieger Institute is home to four (soon-to-be five) nonpublic schools serving nearly 500 publicly funded students from throughout Maryland. Our schools are committed to providing comprehensive, innovative special education and related services for children, adolescents, and young adults with a wide range of learning, social, emotional, behavioral, physical, neurological and developmental disabilities. The Institute provides an education to public school students, funded by their local educational agencies to receive instruction in our programs.

Child and adolescent students are referred to, and placed in, our school programs by the local school’s IEP team, which includes the student’s parents or guardians, when it is determined that the local school/system is unable to meet the needs of the student.

To serve students with complex medical, developmental, and behavioral needs, our staffing model requires that we employ nearly an equal number of highly trained teachers, related-service clinicians, and support staff. We have long-standing partnerships with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the local education agencies based upon our specialized expertise and commitment to the population of children we serve.

Rationale:

Senate Bill 311 seeks to support nonpublic schools teacher salaries to ensure that their compensation accurately matches their level of professional training and talent and is commensurate with that of their public school peers

The ability of our schools to provide exemplary service for students with significant special education needs, as well as related clinical and behavioral supports is, in large part, because of our highly skilled and educated workforce of teachers and support staff who dedicate themselves to the children and families we serve. Unfortunately, because of the sizeable salary disparities between public and nonpublic schoolteachers, our educators annually face the decision to remain with our program or seek significantly higher wages with the public school systems. Kennedy Krieger Schools has seen a frankly unsustainable turnover of 20%, per school year over 10 years, of our special education teachers. This high turnover predates the added challenges imposed by workforce shortages among school teachers in Maryland and elsewhere.

In 2020, the Maryland General Assembly passed budget narrative that formed a Salary Parity Workgroup at MSDE. As a member of the Maryland Association of Nonpublic Special Education Facilities (MANSEF) and with an ongoing collaborative partnership with MSDE, Kennedy Krieger was honored to participate in the workgroup. The workgroup, composed of representation from the Local School Systems, Nonpublic Schools,

MSDE and Legislative Services, reviewed survey data compiled from two separate studies. Both studies found a gap when comparing annual salaries between a nonpublic educator and a public school educator. Depending on the jurisdiction of comparison the gap was between \$3,600 and \$23,600 (7.3% and 25.8%, respectively).

As recently as 25 years ago, when Kennedy Krieger School had only one program and there were fewer nonpublic school options, Maryland's students with complex disabilities were often separated from their families and sent out of state to residential facilities, at significantly greater expense to Maryland as well as extraordinary distress to children and their families. Nonpublic schools were established in Maryland to assure that these students are able to continue living with their families while attending school.

Kennedy Krieger appreciates the supplemental funds provided by the legislature in FY22 and FY23 for teacher salaries and the legislative commitment to support a long-term, systemic approach to achieving parity. Through that, Maryland can continue to support the workforce necessary to provide free appropriate public education to all Maryland students seeking public education.

Kennedy Krieger Institute requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 311.