

February 06, 2023

To: Senate Budget and Tax Committee.

RE: Senate Bill 311- Nonpublic Education - Special Education Placements - Renaming and Teacher Salaries (Teacher Pay Parity Act), By: Senators Zucker, Elfreth, Guzzone, King, and Salling, Introduced and read first time: January 27, 2023 and Assigned to: Budget and Taxation

Dear Senate Budget and Tax Committee,

My name is Elizabeth Miesner and I am Special Education Teacher, I work at non-public school, which is currently located in Hagerstown, MD. Before coming to my current place of employment, I worked in public school for a year, prior to that I worked in non-public school located Jefferson, MD (right outside of Frederick Maryland) for about four years. So, I have experience both school environments and the pay difference. When I work for the non-public school in Jefferson, MD I took on a position as Special Education Teacher, I got paid salary based, broken down it was about \$19.00 per hour (give or take). So every two week I made about \$1,520 before taxes, so I brought home about \$1,142.00 after taxes. That was to start with me having my BS degree working starting to work on Master's degree in Special Education.

When that non-public school closed back in 2020, I then was referred (including my co-workers) to Frederick county's public school system. I applied and they offered me a job and I did accepted. The job position was for a Special Education Teacher, within the public school system. I was paid salary, and broken down was about \$23.00 an hour, I was paid give or take about \$2,000 twice a month, after taxes and insurance was take out from my gross pay, and I still brought home about \$1,500 give or take. That starting pay with the public school system was to start, and with me still only have my BS degree and working on Master's degree in Special Education. I am sure if I had stayed; my pay would have gone up couple thousand based on my education and experience as teacher. With two-year teaching experience alone, I could have started out at \$53,000 a year with Frederick County public schools. Starting out with FCPS, with one-year teaching experience and BS degree, one would start at about \$48,000 a year. That alone was and is more than non-public school teachers start pay. I get those numbers from me previous employment, and what was shared with me at the time I was hired and talking over my pay.

Then at the end of that school year with the public school system, I left because there was not position for me the following school. In addition, I had realized I found my passion (calling) to work in non-public school with student whom require special education services outside of public school. I always questioned why the pay was so different between the two, public school and non-public school that is.

So when came to my currently place of employment, I am again salary base, my starting pay was about \$1,495.56 every two weeks before taxes. After taxes, I took home \$1,052.04 every two weeks. That was with BS degree and me working on Master's and now having two years of teaching experience. For me Starting out at nonpublic school with same credentials and now

having the two years of teaching experience, starting salary pay for me was about \$35,893.44 a year. That big different, and it sure does make big difference to make bank account.

When I finished my Master's degree May 2022, I got small pay increase, before taxes about \$1,895.56. Now we take out taxes, I currently bring home about \$1,354.98 every two weeks. That is still less than the starting pay with public school system, to which I mention earlier.

Non-public school teachers should be paid more than they are currently getting Paid. Why?

Well For one reason the cost of living has increased, and for me personal my current house payment (monthly bases) is more than one of my pay checks. People are struggle to pay their bills, and for the years that I have worked in non-public school, the turnover rate is so high because people find better paying jobs outside of on-public school system. Gas station cashiers and supervisor are making \$15 hour an up that is without spending thousands of dollars on an education.

Second, non-public school teachers should be paid the same as public school teacher because as the job requirements, MSDE requirements, experience and so on are accounted for in the same way. In addition, something to take in to consideration as well is that non-public school teachers encounter behavioral, mental and emotional issues outside of typical student. In addition, not to mention changing of pull-ups for the student who are not potty-trained, and the aggressive behaviors that are displayed on daily bases that non-public school teacher do encounter. Which is part of why the student who attend non-public school like that one I work in, they are not able to attend public school, which managing those behaviors alone is a job by itself.

To take on such a teaching position, is not for everyone. Nevertheless, for those who do take on a teaching position such as, Kudos to them (and myself), because it is not an easy job, and pay to some is no longer worth it anymore. Which again leads to bad attitude and those seeking other jobs with better pay and potential having to deal with a little less stress. While you have some who still choose to teach in non-public school for more than just a paycheck. We that choose that, we also need an equal pay to other teachers not working non-public school. We still need and want to live off our paycheck, not just survive from pay to pay check.

The struggle is real, and I know I need to make more in order to live, take care of my family. I am tired of surviving paycheck to pay check. I am tired of having just enough to hopefully pay my bills, get groceries and put gas in my car, and hope to have enough money to get to the next paycheck. As a parent, it does hurt to say no a lot to your child because money is the root most issue(s). It is not cool to put hours and money into getting education to then provide education to others, to work hard all week... and to what only to have the bare minimum to show for it, all because of what a person, like myself gets paid as non-public school teacher. Yet, we have to put so much to become a teacher. It makes no sense and it not fair to me, or to those in the same position as me.

A third thing, non-public school teachers including myself deserve to be equal to their public school counterparts and compensated for what we do. After all, aside of cost of living going up and many of us struggle paycheck to pay heck, I and long with many other have about Student

loans, maybe personal loans and not to mention the out of pocket cost to become a teacher. I have about \$100,000 in student loans, out pocket cost myself, and still have more to go. We as teacher have to put out that money to continue to keep a teaching license, and to keep up with MSDE requirements. Putting in the time, effort, schooling, etc. Teachers all around should having higher starting pay and pay raises as time goes on. In addition, teacher of a non-public school so have equal and higher starting pay just as our count parts.

These are just three out of many reasons why I would like for you to support and vote for Senate Bill 311 bill: Nonpublic Education - Special Education Placements - Renaming and Teacher Salaries (Teacher Pay Parity Act)

Thanks so much,

Elizabeth Miesner