

Workgroup to Study the Wages of Education Support Professionals / BILL
#HB1234/#SB735

Official Testimony; Position: **FAVORABLE**

To the Ways and Means and Appropriations Committees:

My name is Michael Kranick, and I'm a Baltimore resident, a Baltimore City Public Schools System Special Educator of Secondary ELA, and a proud member of the Baltimore Teachers Union. I support the Workgroup to Study the Wages of Education Support Professionals / BILL #HB1234/#SB735.

The results of the bill's study will finally bring light to the wage-inequities disproportionately affecting ESPs, or otherwise known in my district, PSRPs: Paraprofessionals and Paraeducators. PSRPs are the lifeblood of the school, and I will do my best to encapsulate the immeasurable & invaluable support, wisdom, and experience I have received while working with one paraeducator in particular: Mr. Lymon. Mr. Lymon was the most respected, dedicated, and beloved member of my school. He went above and beyond for anyone and everyone every single day no matter what was going on in his life or anyone else's. The man's patience, consistency, flexibility, and warmth radiated throughout the building as students and staff interacted with him. Whenever I was with Mr. Lymon, I knew everything was going to be just fine.

I began my teaching career in Baltimore City at my current (and only) school six years ago, and I was fortunate enough to have been paired with Mr. Lymon on my first day to teach Middle School ELA. Throughout the years, we continued to learn from each other, support each other, and became one of the best teaching teams at our school. When I transitioned from middle school to high school ELA, Lymon was right there with me as my rock and my teaching partner. Between watching our 8th graders from my first year of teaching to winning our school's Teacher and Para of the Year awards in the same year, we got to see the fruits of our labor and did not have to visualize our impact or efforts. We always joked that if the school closed or the district moved one of us, the other would follow because we were that good.

Unfortunately, this year, due to personal financial constraints and hardships, Mr. Lymon had to make a choice in order to provide for his family: a.) continue working within the position he had held for over a decade, the partnership we had over the past six years, and the students & staff he loved so much with no advancement in sight toward a living wage and risk financial ruin, or b.) explore other career opportunities that would provide a living wage. In the end, Mr. Lymon chose the latter because he had no other choice.

I believe that passing of this bill is essential because I know there are many other Lymon's in the ESP role who may have to face the nearly impossible choice between financial security and stability, or ruin. No one should have to live paycheck without being able to create a meager savings because of an unlivable wage, especially not the most effective ESP I have had the invaluable privilege of calling my colleague and my friend. I respectfully urge this

committee to issue a favorable decision to create a Workgroup to Study the Wages of Education Support Professionals so that no ESP will have to choose between the work they love and the work they need to survive.

Sincerely,

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