

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
First Reader

Senate Bill 764

(Senator Zucker, *et al.*)

Budget and Taxation

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Education – Minimum Wage for Education Support Professionals

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This bill requires local school boards to pay education support professionals (ESPs) a minimum wage of \$25 per hour by July 1, 2028. “Education support professionals” are noncertificated public school employees designated as part of a nonsupervisory bargaining unit. The State Board of Education (SBE) may adopt regulations to carry out the bill. By December 1, 2026, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must submit a report to the Governor and General Assembly with an estimate of the total cost of implementing the bill’s requirement, disaggregated by local school system. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** None. SBE can adopt regulations, if necessary, with existing budgeted resources. The bill otherwise affects only local school systems.

**Local Effect:** Local school system expenditures increase significantly, likely by hundreds of millions of dollars, beginning in FY 2029, but a more reliable estimate is not feasible, as discussed below. No effect on local revenues. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** The State minimum wage is \$15 per hour, which is not adjusted annually for inflation. There is no minimum wage rate for ESPs.

A “public school employee” means a noncertificated individual who is employed for at least nine months per year on a full-time basis by a public school employer. In Baltimore City, a public school employee includes a noncertificated employee who does not work for at least nine months per year. A “noncertificated employee,” in Montgomery County, means only a full-time employee, but is otherwise not defined in State law.

Public school employees may form, join, and participate in the activities of employee organizations of their own choice to be represented on all matters that relate to salaries, wages, hours, and other working conditions. In general, and subject to specified exceptions, each county may not have more than three bargaining units for public school employees, and each unit may not include both supervisory and nonsupervisory employees, as defined in statute.

### *Joint Chairmen’s Report*

The 2025 Joint Chairmen’s Report (JCR) required MSDE to submit a report to the budget committees by August 1, 2025 with:

- the number of ESPs by local school system and job classification;
- the number of vacant ESP positions by local school system; and
- the number of ESPs statewide that earn less than \$25 per hour, by local school system and job classification.

The request specified that ESPs are considered to include, but are not limited to, the following job categories: food service, transportation, custodial and maintenance workers, skilled trades, student health services, clerical services security services, and paraeducators or other individual student aides.

**Local Expenditures:** The report submitted by MSDE in response to the JCR request identified 46,884 ESP positions in local school systems. MSDE advises that its staff data collection system does not distinguish between supervisory and nonsupervisory personnel, so the count may include some supervisory staff. **Exhibit 1** shows the total number of ESP positions in each local school system and the number identified as not earning at least \$25 per hour.

**Exhibit 1**  
**Educational Support Professionals Earning Less than \$25 per hour,**  
**by Local School System**

	<b><u>Total ESP</u></b> <b><u>Positions</u></b>	<b><u>Vacant</u></b> <b><u>Positions</u></b>	<b><u>Filled</u></b> <b><u>Positions</u></b>	<b><u>ESPs Earning</u></b> <b><u>Less Than</u></b> <b><u>\$25 per hour</u></b>	<b><u>% Below</u></b> <b><u>\$25 per hour</u></b>
Allegany	429	23	406	272	63%
Anne Arundel	3,362	125	3,237	1,314	39%
Baltimore City	3,145	354	2,791	958	30%
Baltimore	5,288	202	5,086	1,678	32%
Calvert	851	83	768	362	43%
Caroline	382	6	376	274	72%
Carroll	1,128	33	1,095	550	49%
Cecil	684	38	646	262	38%
Charles	1,597	56	1,541	638	40%
Dorchester	314	8	306	192	61%
Frederick	2,848	127	2,721	1,568	55%
Garrett	189	1	188	104	55%
Harford	1,891	102	1,789	1,002	53%
Howard	2,875	107	2,768	1,008	35%
Kent	120	5	115	67	56%
Montgomery	9,831	370	9,461	1,087	11%
Prince George's	7,534	848	6,686	2,023	27%
Queen Anne's	290	4	286	123	42%
St. Mary's	862	8	854	367	43%
Somerset	221	33	188	162	73%
Talbot	231	17	214	156	68%
Washington	1,391	82	1,309	958	69%
Wicomico	993	32	961	645	65%
Worcester	428	6	422	247	58%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>46,884</b>	<b>2,670</b>	<b>44,214</b>	<b>16,017</b>	<b>34%</b>

ESP: Education Support Professional

Source: Maryland State Department of Education; Department of Legislative Services

As Exhibit 1 shows, there are approximately 16,000 ESPs earning less than \$25 per hour in the State. Without additional information about their wages and hours worked, a reliable estimate of the cost of increasing their hourly wage to \$25 is not feasible. Responses from a small number of local school systems confirm the significant fiscal effect.

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools estimates a total cost of approximately \$46 million, which includes the cost of adjusting the wage scale to reflect a new base wage of \$25 per hour. Frederick County Public Schools estimates a first-year cost of \$77.3 million. St. Mary's County Public Schools estimates a first-year cost of nearly \$21 million.

*For illustrative purposes only*, if all of the ESPs earning less than \$25 per hour earn the State minimum wage (\$15 per hour) and work an average of 6 hours per day for 180 days, the total cost of raising their wages to \$25 per hour would be nearly \$173 million, which does not account for fringe benefit payments tied to wages or the cost of increasing the wages of employees currently earning \$25 per hour to account for rebasing the wage scale. To the extent that ESPs earn more than minimum wage or work for fewer hours and/or days, the total costs are less but likely in the hundreds of millions of dollars, divided across all 24 local school systems.

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### **Additional Information**

**Recent Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See SB 892 and HB 1369 of 2025.

**Designated Cross File:** HB 1205 (Delegate Wims, *et al.*) - Ways and Means and Appropriations.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education; Department of Budget and Management; Baltimore City Public Schools; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Frederick County Public Schools; St. Mary's County Public Schools; Talbot County Public Schools; Wicomico County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 24, 2026  
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Analysis by: Michael C. Rubenstein

Direct Inquiries to:  
(410) 946-5510  
(301) 970-5510