



Garrett County Education Association

Affiliated with MSEA/NEA

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Garrett County Commissioners
203 S. 4th Street
Oakland MD 21550

Garrett County Board of Education
40 S. 2nd Street
Oakland MD 21550

To the Board of Garrett County Commissioners and the Garrett County Board of Education,

A recent survey underscores a concerning 46% drop in college enrollment within education majors across the nation. This unsettling trend has triggered critical teacher shortages nationwide, along with a notable decrease in individuals pursuing roles as education support professionals (ESPs). This scarcity of educators significantly impacts American students, who depend on the public education system to equip them with essential skills and tools for a prosperous future.

Former educators, when questioned about their departure from the teaching profession, consistently highlight a common issue: salary. In Garrett County, even teachers holding master's degrees and extensive continuing education credits start their careers with salaries matching the county's median income. Additionally, educators face exceptionally high standards of performance and conduct, often exceeding expectations in professions with higher pay. Educators in Garrett County bear the weight of flawed public policies, societal challenges, and rural poverty. Yet, driven by their commitment to shaping a brighter future for local youth, they persevere despite the emotional toll.

As living costs rise in Garrett County and Maryland's Blueprint for the Future emphasizes elevating the status and salaries of teaching professionals, it's time for Garrett County to align with the rest of the state in addressing decades-long salary disparities for teachers and ESPs. For instance, current county ESPs earn an average annual salary of \$24,000.00, significantly below federal and state poverty lines. Furthermore, the typical Garrett County teacher earns roughly \$16,000.00 less than their peers in other parts of the state. This status quo necessitates change.

While many Maryland counties have committed to raising teacher salaries in line with the Maryland Blueprint, Garrett County has yet to outline a clear plan for implementation. Experienced local educators worry that new teachers might suddenly earn more than those with a decade or more of service. This uncertainty surrounding salaries dampens morale, especially as other counties prioritize dignified compensation for teachers.

As both the president, treasurer, and vice president of the Garrett County Education Association (GCEA) and dedicated educators within Garrett County, our aim is to foster collaboration between the Board of Education and

the Board of County Commissioners, guaranteeing the highest quality education for our students. The unwavering determination and resilience of local youth continually inspire us, holding the potential to uplift our community and nation. Guiding these students toward a promising future is an honor, and county educators are united in their dedication to this cause. As the state acknowledges the significance of public educators, we urge collaboration in advocating for fair compensation for Garrett County teachers and ESPs.

GCEA's recent survey confirms that salary is a top concern for both teachers and ESPs in Garrett County. It often seems that county officials view education funding as a challenge, diverting resources from other areas. GCEA seeks to reshape this perspective, reminding county leaders and education stakeholders that investing in education is essential. Such investment equips local youth to face an evolving future with confidence and nurtures future innovators and leaders. Research consistently demonstrates that well-compensated teachers and ESPs contribute to better educational outcomes.

We firmly believe that through collaboration between GCEA, the Board of Education, and the Board of County Commissioners, we can develop a solution to enhance teacher salaries, increase ESP wages, and elevate the education profession's status. While political polarization may dominate broader conversations, our community need not be divided. Our shared goal is simple: providing an exceptional education for our children. Ensuring fair compensation, equitable treatment, and enthusiasm among our teachers and ESPs is a pivotal step. With this shared understanding, I am confident that together, we can overcome this challenge.

Heather Gosnell

Heather Gosnell
President, Garrett County Education Association (GCEA)

Angel Simms

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Corrine Clark

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