

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4864

To direct a study on paraprofessionals and education support staff.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 23, 2026

Mr. MARKEY (for himself, Mr. PADILLA, and Mr. BOOKER) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To direct a study on paraprofessionals and education support staff.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Providing Under-
5 standing of Paraprofessionals in Learning Act” or the
6 “PUPIL Act”.

7 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

8 In this Act:

9 (1) ESEA.—The terms “professional develop-
10 ment”, “Secretary”, and “State” have the meanings

1 given the terms in section 8101 of the Elementary
2 and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.
3 7801).

4 (2) EDUCATION SUPPORT STAFF.—The term
5 “education support staff” (also sometimes known as
6 “classified school employees” or “education support
7 professionals”) includes professionals who work in
8 early childhood education settings or schools that
9 serve children in prekindergarten through grade 12
10 in clerical and administrative services, transportation
11 services, food and nutrition services, custodial and
12 maintenance services, health and student services,
13 technical services, and skilled trades.

14 (3) PARAPROFESSIONAL.—The term “para-
15 professional” has the meaning given that term in
16 section 3201 of the Elementary and Secondary Edu-
17 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7011).

18 **SEC. 3. FINDINGS.**

19 Congress finds the following:

20 (1) Paraprofessionals and education support
21 staff are invaluable members of the education sys-
22 tem and school community.

23 (2) More than 2,000,000 paraprofessionals and
24 education support staff are the frontline workers
25 who transform public elementary and secondary

1 schools in the United States from brick and mortar
2 buildings to places of learning and support for more
3 than 54,000,000 students across the United States.

4 (3) Many paraprofessionals and education sup-
5 port staff are, as a matter of practice, laid off at the
6 end of each school year and rehired annually, and
7 lack job security.

8 (4) Over 500,000 paraprofessionals provide es-
9 sential support for children with disabilities to access
10 a free appropriate public education in the least re-
11 strictive environment.

12 (5) While paraprofessionals and education sup-
13 port staff are often the most diverse subset of school
14 employees, are more likely to have grown up in the
15 communities they serve, and are trusted school com-
16 munity members for many students and parents, the
17 voices of paraprofessionals and education support
18 staff are not always reflected in school policies.

19 **SEC. 4. STUDY ON THE PARAPROFESSIONAL AND EDU-**
20 **CATION SUPPORT STAFF WORKFORCE.**

21 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the
22 date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall seek
23 to enter into a contract with the National Academies of
24 Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to conduct a study
25 examining the paraprofessional and education support

1 staff workforce that serve children in prekindergarten
 2 through grade 12 in the United States enrolled at public
 3 elementary schools or secondary schools. Such study shall
 4 contain the elements described in subsection (b) and shall
 5 assess the characteristics, roles, effectiveness, preparation,
 6 compensation, and career pathways of paraprofessionals
 7 and education support staff, as well as the policies and
 8 investments that shape the paraprofessional and education
 9 support staff workforce.

10 (b) ELEMENTS.—The study described in subsection
 11 (a) shall—

12 (1) examine—

13 (A) the demographic, educational, and pro-
 14 fessional characteristics of the paraprofessional
 15 and education support staff workforce that
 16 serve children in prekindergarten through grade
 17 12;

18 (B) pathways into the paraprofessional and
 19 education support staff roles and patterns of re-
 20 cruitment, retention, and tenure; and

21 (C) minimum qualification and
 22 credentialing requirements, including variations
 23 across States and local educational agencies
 24 and compliance with the certification and licen-
 25 sure requirements of section 1111(g)(2)(J) of

1 the Elementary and Secondary Education Act
2 of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6311(g)(2)(J)), and for
3 paraprofessionals serving children with disabili-
4 ties, compliance with section 612(a)(14)(B) of
5 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
6 (20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(14)(B));

7 (2) review the roles and responsibilities that
8 paraprofessionals and education support staff as-
9 sume across prekindergarten through grade 12 set-
10 tings and student populations;

11 (3) evaluate the available evidence on the im-
12 pact of paraprofessional and education support staff
13 on student academic, social-emotional, and behav-
14 ioral outcomes, and identify the conditions under
15 which paraprofessionals and education support staff
16 are most effective, including considerations of train-
17 ing, supervision, role clarity, and instructional con-
18 text;

19 (4) analyze compensation structures, including
20 salaries, benefits, and employment conditions, and
21 document variation across States, local educational
22 agencies, and school contexts, and identify evidence-
23 informed approaches to improving compensation,
24 stability, and overall job quality;

1 (5) assess the availability, quality, and effective-
2 ness of professional development opportunities for
3 paraprofessionals and education support staff, and
4 identify strategies to strengthen those opportunities;

5 (6) examine career advancement pathways, in-
6 cluding model programs and policies that support
7 progression to certified teaching and other edu-
8 cational roles;

9 (7) identify Federal, State, and local policy le-
10 vers and investments that influence the recruitment,
11 preparation, effectiveness, advancement, and reten-
12 tion of the paraprofessional and education support
13 staff workforce, and recommend actionable strate-
14 gies to strengthen and sustain such workforce in
15 ways that support educational quality and student
16 outcomes;

17 (8) identify data gaps and areas where addi-
18 tional research is needed;

19 (9) with respect to each classification estab-
20 lished under subsection (c)—

21 (A) analyze the average starting salary for
22 each such classification and the average salary
23 for each such classification; and

24 (B) compare those starting and average
25 salaries by classification and location, to the

1 cost of living or livable wages for the respective
 2 locations in which those education support staff
 3 and paraprofessionals reside;

4 (10) examine relevant employment models and
 5 workforce arrangements, including—

6 (A) the use and prevalence of contracted,
 7 privatized, or outsourced education support
 8 staff and paraprofessionals; and

9 (B) the implications of those employment
 10 models and workforce arrangements on work-
 11 force stability, training, supervision, and work-
 12 ing conditions, the alignment of those models
 13 and arrangements with school goals, and the ef-
 14 fects of those models and arrangements on edu-
 15 cational quality and student outcomes; and

16 (11) make recommendations for Congress, Fed-
 17 eral agencies, States, local educational agencies, and
 18 other relevant stakeholders, based on the findings of
 19 the study.

20 (c) POSITION CLASSIFICATIONS.—In carrying out the
 21 study under this section, the National Academies of
 22 Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine shall establish classi-
 23 fications for the different education support staff and
 24 paraprofessional positions, and with respect to each ele-
 25 ment of the study, as described in subsection (b),

1 disaggregate data based on those classifications, to the ex-
2 tent practicable.

3 (d) REPORT.—The agreement under subsection (a)
4 shall direct the National Academies of Sciences, Engineer-
5 ing, and Medicine to complete the study under this sec-
6 tion, and transmit to Congress and make publicly available
7 a report on the results of the study, not later than 24
8 months after the date of entry into the agreement.

9 (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
10 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act
11 \$2,000,000.

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