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Good Afternoon, my name is Patricia A. Foerster retired teacher, former president of the Maryland State Teachers Association and an at-large member of the Progressive Maryland Board of Directors. I urge your support of HB 430. This bill reflects the belief held by a majority of Maryland citizens that jobs should provide a 'living wage'. Its passage will represent leadership by the State of Maryland on an issue that citizens support.

My specific, special interest is the welfare of Maryland children and their educational attainment. Research quantifies the key role parents play in their child's academic achievement. More specifically, their personal/family income level, their support and involvement in their child's education and the level of their own educational attainment are all related to a child's academic achievement. The education community and our partners from other segments of the community understand the complex and inter-relatedness of factors that contribute to a student's school success and academic achievement.

To each of those points, however, research provides data to guide our decision making.

On the first point, there is a correlation between a parent/family's income and their children's academic achievement. The following material is excerpted from an Issue Paper from the Wisconsin Education Association Council, an NEA affiliate. The total Issue Paper can be found at <http://www.weac.org/greatschools/Issuepapers/socioconditions.htm>.

*This study found that income, family size, and the mother's age when the child was born were modestly related to achievement. Interestingly, single-parent status was by itself not significantly related to achievement levels. The authors of the study suggest that the performance gap that exists between one- and two-parent families is a result of other factors, including family income, family size, and/or the parents' education levels.*

**Many others have reported the effect of poverty on student success in school, including the following:**

- *"The longer a child is in poverty, the more deleterious the effect on his or her educational growth. Furthermore, the concentration of poverty within a school can be shown to be harmful to all students in that school whether or not an individual student comes from a poor background" (Orland, p. 43).*
- *All student poverty is not equal. Students experiencing long-term poverty or who attend schools with high poverty concentrations are much more likely to have educational difficulties than students from families whose duration in poverty is short or who attend schools with low poverty rates. In addition, the findings suggest that many of the same students who experience long-term poverty also attend schools with high poverty concentrations (Orland, p. 54).*
- *There is a great difference between black and white children in regard to poverty and length of time in poverty, based on research at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research. Black children are poor for an average of 5.4 of their first 15 years of life, compared to an average of less than one year for nonblack children. Approximately one in four black children surveyed is poor for ten years or more, while one-half are poor for five years or more. The comparable rates for white*

*children are one in 200 (poor for ten years or more) and one in 20 (poor for five years or more) (Orland, p. 47).*

- *About two-thirds of the nation's poor are white. However, the rate of poverty is higher for minorities. Four of nine black children and three of eight Hispanic children are poor. (Five Million Children, 1990).*
- *Conditions of poverty are not confined to urban areas. In fact, of the young children living in poverty, 54 percent live in urban areas, 26 percent live in rural areas, and 24 percent live in suburbs. A study conducted in 1989 by the National Rural Development Institute concluded that rural children fare worse than their city counterparts in 34 of 39 statistical comparisons.*

Try as we may, as we have for years, schools cannot unilaterally make up the differences caused by a low family income and economic instability. With a living wage, we hope families won't need to hold down multiple jobs in order to provide the basic necessities for their children. This takes us to the second point, parental support and involvement!

The current job market and economy has strained everyone in a search for personal time. As related to student achievement, research is clear on the value of parental support, involvement and engagement. Thirty years of research show that children perform better, go farther in school and enjoy school more when parents are involved in their education. Additionally, absenteeism is reduced and behavior improved. The following statistics are cited by the Parent Institute.

- ✓ Students from families with high parental involvement showed success rates 30% higher than those with lower parental involvement.
- ✓ Test scores grew at a rate of 40% when there were higher levels of parental outreach.

As a result, Maryland's local school systems have increased their commitment to parental outreach. It is my contention, and I believe your goal that one state policy should not counter or lessen the impact of another. And so, I submit to you that by passing the living wage bill, HB 430, you will assist parents directly as they search first for the time to attend to a greater extent to their child's academic achievement. Statistics and data aside, as a teacher, I clearly remember helping children develop their own resources and resilience to make progress regardless. But those efforts were not always successful or enough. Children not only need their parents to get involved in the education at school, but possibly more importantly to also encourage learning at home and set high, but reasonable academic expectations.

Achievement data illustrates the correlation between the mother's level of educational attainment and her children's academic achievement. As we promote life-long learning, we know of adults who have 'taken up their books' (a colloquial phrase Texas) and become a family of learners along side their children. At this point, let me reiterate that no one factor can be identified as the one that makes all the difference in the academic achievement of all students. But as we seek to engage our local communities in pre-K to 12 educational systems, parents continuing their education would be a wonderful additional outcome.

I do not believe the resources of the State of Maryland should support the current expansion of America's underclass. Quoting from the Conclusions in the WEAC Issue Paper, "poverty . . . . should not be perceived as an excuse or justification for poor performance . . . . But it should remind us that to ignore poverty in any discussion of improving student achievement is disingenuous . . . ." Whether we are creating employment opportunities closer to where people live in order to reduce our daily commutes or finding ways to pay an appropriate living wage for an honest eight hours of work, I am here to support our children's need for quality time with their parents. You can support that goal as well by vote 'yes' for a living wage. I urge you to support HB 430.