

CONGRESSMAN

JESÚS "CHUY" GARCÍA

4th CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS

Pay Paraprofessionals and Education Support Staff Act

House Leads: Reps. Chuy García (IL-04), Jahana Hayes (CT-05), Adelita Grijalva (AZ-07), Greg Casar (TX-35)
Senate Lead: Sen. Ed Markey (D-MA)

Summary

The Pay Paraprofessionals and Education Support Staff Act establishes a national minimum wage floor of \$45,000 for full-time paraprofessionals and education support staff working in public K-12 schools. The bill recognizes the essential role these workers play in keeping schools running and students safe, while ensuring that no one working full-time in a school earns poverty-level wages.

Background

Paraprofessionals and education support staff, including classroom aides, bus drivers, food service workers, custodians, and clerical staff, are the backbone of public education. Yet, more than one-third earn under \$25,000 a year, forcing many to work multiple jobs or rely on public assistance. These low wages contribute to high turnover and staffing shortages that directly affect school safety, student learning, and the continuity of services.

Key Provisions

- States would be required to set a minimum base salary for full-time equivalent paraprofessionals and education support staff, and a minimum hourly wage for part-time equivalents.
- The minimum salary will increase with experience and be indexed to inflation beginning after a set period.
- Federal grants would be made available to states to support local educational agencies in meeting the wage floor and related professional development requirements.
- The legislation underscores the role of paraprofessionals and education support staff (bus drivers, food service workers, custodians, administrative staff, etc.) as vital to school operations and student success.
- Encourages states and districts to provide pathways for professional development and advancement for education support professionals.

Why it Matters

- Raising wages helps schools recruit and retain qualified support staff, reducing disruption for students.
- The majority of paraprofessionals and support staff are women and people of color; fair pay advances gender and racial equity.
- Stable, respected support staff mean safer schools, more consistent learning environments, and improved outcomes for students.
- Living wages strengthen local economies, reduce reliance on public assistance, and recognize the dignity of public-school workers.

Endorsing Organizations

American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association, Service Employees International Union, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), EdTrust, Council for Exceptional Children, National Women's Law Center