

## **Kirwan Work Group Remarks on Concentrated Poverty**

Good morning,

My name is Corey Gaber and I'm a 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Southwest Baltimore Charter School, and a founding member of BMORE, the Baltimore Movement Of Rank and file Educators, which is a caucus of the Baltimore Teachers Union.

The manner in which we define concentrated poverty and allocate resources based on those definitions will make an enormous impact on whether the commission's recommendations serve to exacerbate or ameliorate inequity.

There is a huge difference between a 40% poverty rate school and a 50% poverty rate school, again a difference between 50% and 60%, and an even larger chasm between a 60% and 90% poverty rate school. Those differences are real, and are connected to historical oppression, whose impacts accumulate over time. Greater needs require greater resources to get kids where they need to be.

You would think I was an unsatisfactory teacher if I treated a student reading on a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade level the same as a student reading on a 4<sup>th</sup> grade level. Ditto with a student reading on a 4<sup>th</sup> grade level with one on a 5<sup>th</sup> grade level, and so on. Each of those student's needs are different, and they're greater than the needs of my students reading on grade level. It's common sense, yet differentiation seems to fly out the window when we speak about the needs of an entire school, even though when you multiply the needs of a single student times an entire school population, the need is further amplified beyond the sum of the individuals.

The commission is already considering sliding or tiered scale options along these lines. I applaud this line of thinking and encourage its implementation. I noticed in the draft discussion document a wide array of options for how schools and systems can utilize resources from the concentrated poverty rate, and, I noticed that once the discussion moved towards higher tiers of poverty and historical oppression, the options for utilizing those additional resources became narrower and more prescriptive.

The difference between a successful mixed income school and a successful 95% FARMS rate school located in a redlined neighborhood isn't just safe transportation and extended learning time, though those are worthy and important goals. There should be similar levels of flexibility afforded to the neediest schools as those at the 40% threshold. Perhaps a school with a large ESOL population may want to train and hire parents as paid volunteers to act as additional translators and educators in the classroom. Perhaps a school with severe levels of trauma may want a smaller counselor to pupil ratio, or to hire a restorative practices coordinator. Perhaps schools serving the highest concentration of historically oppressed students, where teacher turnover is the greatest, may want to hire an additional teacher coach to support the growth of early career teachers that dominate their classrooms. Confining schools to only 2 options limits creative solutions that could be replicated elsewhere when proven successful.

Let's not impose a one size fits all solution to the culturally, racially, and economically diverse set of schools that exist within our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.