

Public Hearing November 12, 2019

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	AFFILIATION	TITLE/ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	WRITTEN TESTIMONY
Doug	Prouty		Vice President, Montgomery County	
Julian	Scrivens	Maryland State Education Association	Charles County	
Maria	Eligio		Baltimore County	
Theresa	Dudley		Prince George's County	
Siobhan	Tedsten		Calvert County	
Joe	Francaviglia	Strong Schools Maryland		
Jordon	Steele			
Chip	Bertino	Worcester County	Commissioner	
Diana	Purnell		Commissioner President	Yes
Lou	Taylor		Superintendent	
Harold	Higgins		Administrative Officer	
Shebra	Evans	Montgomery County Public Schools	Board President	
Jack	Smith		Superintendent	
Cheryl	Casciani	Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners		Yes
Shamoyia	Gardiner	Advocates of Children and Youth	Education Policy Director	Yes
Tolbert	Rowe	Maryland Association of Boards of Education	Immediate Past President	Yes
Julie	Hummer		Legislative Committee Chair	Yes
Pamela	Cousins		Board of Directors Secretary	Yes
Mackenzie	Allen	Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools	Executive Director	Yes
Winifred	Winston	Decoding Dyslexia Maryland	State Leader & Chapter Leader, Baltimore City	
Jeanne	Saum		State Leader & Chapter Leader, Anne Arundel County	Yes
Rudi	Zelman	Literacy Lab		
Keegan	Taylor	Baltimore City Youth Commission	Chair and District 1 Representative	
Patryce	Toye	Maryland Assembly on School Based Health Care		
Joy	Twesigye			Yes
Christina	Koch	Positive Schools Center		
Edna	Harvin Battle	Maryland PTA	President	
Tonya	Sweat		Vice President for Advocacy	Yes
Lois	Hybl	League of Women Voters of Maryland	Co-president	Yes
Heather	May	Maryland Coalition for Community Schools	Project Manager	
Gail	Sunderman	Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline		Yes
Mary Pat	Fannon	Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland	Executive Director	
Scott	Smith		Superintendent, St. Mary's County	Yes
Christopher	Meyer	Maryland Center on Economic Policy	Research Analyst	Yes
Leonard	Zuza			Yes
Kimberly	Humphrey	ACLU of Maryland	Public Policy Counsel	Yes
Kevin	Anderson	NEWfit	Executive Director	
Nyah	Vanterpool		Deputy Director	
Kyle	Potter	Maryland School Psychologists' Association	Chair, Legislative Committee	
Barbara	Jarvis	Lives in Baltimore City		Yes
Janna	Parker			
Irnande	Altema	Mental Health Association of Maryland	Policy Director, Special Populations	
Larry	Porter	Caroline County Commissioner	President	
Patty	Saelens		Superintendent of Schools	Yes
Julia	Dibussolo	Arts Everyday		
Sean	Kennedy	Maryland Public Policy Institute	Visiting Fellow	Yes
Eddie	Hawkins	Baltimore City Youth		
Catherine	Carter	Let Them See Clearly		Yes
Jennifer	Jarvis			Yes
Quantice	Floyd	Arts Education in Maryland Schools	Executive Director	Yes
Jenny	Zito			Yes

Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education
Public Hearing, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD
November 12, 2019

Testimony of **Worcester County Commissioner Chip Bertino**

Dr. Kirwan, Commission members, thank you for hosting this public hearing on this very important topic. My name is **Chip Bertino**, Worcester County Commissioner. Sitting with me is Worcester County Commissioner President **Diana Purnell**, Worcester County Chief Administrative Officer **Harold Higgins** and Worcester County School Superintendent **Lou Taylor**. In the interest of time, I will be speaking for the group.

Worcester County appreciates your efforts to enhance innovation and further excellence in education. There is much to support in the recommendations of this Commission because like you, Worcester County recognizes the great responsibility we all have to ensure the students of our county and counties across the state benefit from a quality education.

As you can see there are a number of Worcester County folks here this evening. With your permission, I'd like to quickly introduce them so you fully appreciate our commitment on this issue.

- Eric Cropper**, Vice President, Education Board Member
- Bill Buchanan**, Education Board Member
- Elena McComas**, Education Board Member
- Vince Tolbert**, Board of Education Chief Financial Officer
- Dee Shorts**, Chief Academic Officer Grades pre-K through 8
- Beth Shockley-Lynch**, President of the Worcester County Teachers Ass'n and a grade school Science teacher.
- Amy Gallagher**, Coordinator of Accountability and Assessment
- Dwayne Apt**, Supervisor of Human Resources, Board of Education
- Matthew Record**, Principal of Pocomoke Middle School

The examination of the Maryland School system and the subsequent recommendations by the Kirwan Commission illuminate the reality that Worcester County in many ways is a leader in education excellence.

From the time the children of Worcester County first walk through the doors of Showell, Buckingham, Ocean City, Snow Hill and Pocomoke elementary schools we as a community have the responsibility to ensure that by the time they walk out the doors of Stephen Decatur, Snow Hill, Pocomoke and Worcester Technical high schools for the last time they are prepared and equipped to successfully embrace the opportunities of college or career.

Between Worcester County government and the Worcester County Board of Education a working relationship has been forged through openness, honesty and at times speaking hard and uncomfortable truths to one another. This has sharpened our focus on what we hold dear – the future of our county and the future of our education system.

This year the Worcester County school system celebrated 151 years of service to our community. During that time, we as county taxpayers have embraced the responsibility to support our teachers and staff. And we have made the necessary investments to ensure school facilities are maintained properly so that teachers can teach and students can learn in safe, clean and functional environments. To be sure, there's room for improvement, there's always room for improvement. But Worcester County has demonstrated time and time again that it knows how best to allocate resources to foster educational achievement among our students. Often, because of the cooperation and ingenuity of County government and the Board of Education the efforts of our teachers and administrators, are on the leading edge of education.

Yet, the unfortunate reality is that when it comes to education allocations by the state, Worcester County has been systemically and historically penalized for the very thing that has made us effective – the positive, engaged and results-oriented relationship among those vested with the responsibility to educate the children of our county. Worcester County's best intentions to for years appropriately fund the school

system based on local student need and available resources were held against us when Maintenance of Effort (MOE) became law in Maryland.

Because it does not include variables such as poverty levels and demographics, the MOE formula as currently calculated, is unfair to Worcester County taxpayers who are forced to fund about 75% of the Board of Education's operational budget, the highest of any other public-school jurisdiction in the state. By comparison, local taxpayers in the neighboring counties of Wicomico and Somerset fund only about 20% of their respective boards of education budgets. How is that fair?

And then there are the capital investments above the per student investments. There are other necessary school system costs borne by Worcester County taxpayers including school construction and remodeling, replacement of HVAC systems and technology. Allocations for these come from either bonding or the general fund which places an additional responsibility on the county's budget and ultimately taxpayers.

Unfortunately, reviewing and revising the MOE funding formula to ensure fairness of state education funding to all school districts was ignored by the Kirwan Funding Group and by the full Kirwan Commission despite the fact this was a stated objective at the Commission's inception. Rather than address and fix the inequities of the MOE formula suffered by Worcester and other counties, the Kirwan Commission recommendations bake the inequities into funding projections going forward, thus ensuring no relief for Worcester County taxpayers and taxpayers in other counties who find themselves in a similar predicament. That is not right.

Just a quick mention about school construction. State school construction funding for Worcester County does not come close to the average 50%/50%, state to local funding ratio articulated by Dr. Kirwan at a recent Wor-Wic Community College presentation. For example, the state's financial contribution to the new Showell Elementary School currently under construction is just about 19%, with the balance resting squarely on the shoulders of county taxpayers.

A planned \$10 million addition to Stephen Decatur Middle School, will receive only about \$400,000 in state funding, about 4%, far below the 50%/50% partnership that state officials regularly proclaim.

At Wor-Wic, Dr. Kirwan was asked whether state education funding could be impacted during slow economic periods. He answered that he believed that in such circumstances, state funding could ease up. His answer raises a red flag.

What impact would there be on the counties during slow economic times should the state ease up on its financial commitment to education funding? Would reduced state funding be transferred to counties to bridge the funding gap? This ambiguity is troublesome because during the most recent lengthy economic downturn, state Highway User allocations to counties were slashed dramatically, never to return fully. That is just one example of the state cutting local funding and/or foisting state budget items to the counties.

Would Worcester and other counties be susceptible to unfunded mandates?

The financial impact of the Kirwan Commission's recommendations on Worcester County and other counties is jarring:

- Mandated increased local spending despite the fact that in Worcester's case we already investing more per student than any other district.

- No adjustment to the MOE formula to ensure state education allocations are fairly distributed among all counties.

- No flexibility for Worcester and other school districts to apply Kirwan recommendations in ways that make sense for local conditions. One size does not fit all. Worcester County is not Baltimore City.

Should the counties be forced to fund at the increased levels stipulated by Kirwan, the money will have to come from other parts of county budgets, either in increased taxes and/or cuts to other services.

Because of the cooperative relationship between the Worcester County Commissioners and the Board of Education, a relationship that can be counted in generations, Worcester County public schools regularly attain high levels of student achievement and facility care. School facilities are maintained at a high level, ensuring that more than 6,600 students have an excellent learning environment. County taxpayers have allocated and continue to allocate money to ensure that schools and classrooms are maintained. In short, disciplined maintenance plans have positively impacted our schools and students. The same cannot be said for other jurisdictions that receive far higher levels of state financial assistance.

In short – Worcester County taxpayers invest more per student than any other jurisdiction in the state and county taxpayers maintain our school facilities at an exceptionally high level without the benefit of a fair state education funding partnership. Worcester is not alone in this concern. The Kirwan recommendations, if adopted in their current form, would deepen the disparity between what is fair and what is not.

Soon the recommendations of the Kirwan Commission will move through the legislative process. It will become caught up in the swirl of political influences.

None of us here this evening knows whether the recommendations will become law. We don't know what form they will take once the bill is debated in the House of Delegates and the Maryland Senate. We don't know what deals will be made for or by state representatives of much larger jurisdictions to attract their votes to ensure passage. We don't know whether county taxpayers throughout the state will be treated fairly. We don't know whether the Governor will sign a final version of the bill.

What we do know, is that regardless of what happens here in Annapolis, Worcester County will do what it has always done – work together to ensure that we continue to provide students an exceptional education experience based on individual student needs, opportunities and county resources.

That's the Worcester Way.

Thank you.

BALTIMORE CITY --- PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BALTIMORE CITY BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS

Testimony of
Cheryl Casciani, former Board Chair of the
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners
Before
The Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education
(*Kirwan Commission*)

November 12, 2019

I am Cheryl Casciani, former Board Chair of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners. I am here today because the school board has its own board meeting this evening, but knowing the importance of the work of the Kirwan Commission and the Funding Workgroup the Board wanted representation tonight.

On behalf of the school board, I first want to start by thanking the Kirwan Commission members and the members of the Funding Workgroup for always thinking of the children of Maryland and working diligently to develop this historic education plan.

One of the most important areas for the school system this year in the upcoming legislative session will focus on the *Kirwan Commission* recommendations that will be turned into legislation. As some know, there has been historic underfunding of the City school district. When the last funding commission was formed, known as the Thornton Commission, a new state funding formula was developed in 2002 that began to provide needed additional resources to City Schools. And, City Schools did begin to improve in academic performance. The graduation rate was climbing and more kids were coming to school ready to learn. However, in 2008 that additional funding stopped because the whole country underwent a great recession. So, we began to slip farther and farther behind.

Once the Kirwan Commission's policies and funding are put into legislator's hands we all need to continuously remind legislators of the great need and of the great importance this legislation will have for our students. The Board and the CEO have been following Kirwan carefully. In fact, the CEO developed City Schools' own Blue Print for Success so that every child feels safe, supported and challenged.

The funding workgroup that tasked at costing out the Kirwan recommendations and the full Commission share the same principles and priorities as the Board. Those priorities include:

- Additional funding for pre-K students. Early learning is key.
- Recognition that concentrated poverty is a great concern and additional funding is needed to combat this.

- Providing teachers adequate resources to teach and incentives to stay in the classroom and not move into administration to receive higher wages.
- The Board also recognized the need to retain and recruit high quality teachers, especially teachers of color so our students see themselves in their teacher.
- The Board directed City Schools to look at Black teacher recruitment and retention and the CEO has developed a plan to work with stakeholders to reimagine the district's Teacher Academy and coordinate with the Baltimore Teachers Union to identify and remove barriers preventing Black teachers from applying and being selected for the Model Teacher pathway, just to name a few.
- Additional funding for struggling learners is in the Kirwan plan and this too is an area the Board shares. Over the last 4 years, we have increased the graduation rate to 72.2%. While we want 100% of our kids to graduate, Kirwan will allow us to provide more resources.
- Career and Technology Education is another shared focus. The Board, like the Commission, wants every child to be able to graduate and go into the work setting with appropriate credentials and/or attend college. The Board approved a CTE audit that will provide further insight into what works and does not work in our system and can help inform where CTE Kirwan dollars would be best used.
- Additional funding for special education is a Kirwan priority. This is very important in City Schools because currently we receive \$80 million for special education, but spend \$300 million.

Another important element in the Funding Workgroup recommendations is how to count poverty for state aid. City Schools no longer collects forms to determine if students should receive free or reduced-price meals because the school system participates in the Community Eligibility Provision federal program that allows all of students to eat. While this is a good thing, it is problematic when it comes to determining state education funding.

The school board has come to the conclusion that City Schools may need to begin collecting an alternative form to identify students eligible for free and reduced price meals. City Schools is currently conducting a pilot where 19 schools are collecting income verification forms, which will then be matched against City Schools records to determine the accuracy. However, concerns that immigrant families may be undercounted still remains; this is an area that City Schools knows needs to be carefully examined in the coming years.

The verbal testimony this evening, coupled with the letters the school system has sent to the Commission and the Funding Workgroup we hope will continue to help inform the Commission as staff finalizes the funding and policy recommendations and ultimately turns the Commission's work into legislation.



Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY) is a statewide nonprofit organization which identifies and proposes policy solutions to issues negatively impacting the lives of Maryland's children and youth. We achieve this mission through data collection and analysis coupled with informed political advocacy efforts grounded in meaningful engagement with directly impacted populations. We recognize that we cannot do this work effectively unless we address the oppressive, systemic ills which impact young people. www.acy.org

Testimony before the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education

November 12, 2019

Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY) believes that the work of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (Kirwan Commission) is among the most critical currently being conducted in Maryland. What this body approves in its final report to the General Assembly will place a stake in the ground—a massive step towards creating a public education system which is truly world-class and offers equitable access to opportunities to all its students. The Commission, its Funding Formula Workgroup, and staff of the Maryland General Assembly and Department of Legislative Services have put forth considerable time and effort for the sake of Maryland's children and our state's collective future; ACY commends all involved.

During the 2019 Maryland General Assembly Legislative Session, ACY was among many organizations which supported the passage of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future into law. As a co-chair of the statewide coalition advocating for the comprehensive passage and full funding of the expected 2020 legislation stemming from the Commission's final report, the Coalition for the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, we are more than committed to seeing this work through. There are many reasons to support the recommendations made by the Commission thus far, though they can easily be surmised: **our kids can't wait.**

The urgency of this moment is real, though we must be certain that the solutions put forth by the Kirwan Commission are the absolute best that can be offered. To that end, ACY strongly urges the Commission to strengthen its final product by including the below recommendations, notes, and considerations in its final report:

Policy Area 1: Early Childhood Education

- Recommend legislation which clarifies that all prekindergarten providers under the mixed-delivery system shall be subject to the provisions of Md. Educ. Art. § 7-305.1, which generally prohibits the suspension or expulsion of a student in grades prekindergarten to 2, except in severe circumstances
- Include language which acknowledges that the designation process for high-quality, full-day prekindergarten programs will require special provisions (i.e., technical support and/or grant funding to assist in meeting new standards) to avoid the disproportionate exclusion of certain community-based providers (particularly those operating in economically oppressed communities and communities which are home to families with varied immigration statuses)
- Note that expansion of prekindergarten provider pool should focus specifically on the inclusion of businesses owned and operated by people of color and other historically excluded demographics, as proportionate to a community's composition as possible

- Explicitly acknowledge current racial disparities in access to high-quality, full-day prekindergarten programming, including but not limited to curricula, pedagogy, and use of exclusionary disciplinary actions such as suspension and expulsion
- Clarify the intended method of creation of a racially and culturally unbiased kindergarten readiness assessment—include specific language requiring that experts in the areas of educating those student groups which currently are not deemed “kindergarten-ready”

Policy Area 2: High-Quality and Diverse Teachers and Leaders

- Explicitly acknowledge the tension which arises at the intersection of promoting National Board for Teaching and Professional Standards certification and increasing the diversity of the teaching workforce. The certification process is subjective enough to allow individual biases to permeate and impact which teachers are certified
 - Note: ACY does not seek to see the state lower certification standards to include more racially or otherwise diverse teachers in its workforce; we instead hope to see a valuation of other forms of teacher quality assessment, certification, and evaluation (i.e., studying the practices of teachers who have been empirically successful with student groups who are not currently being prepared for achievement measures)
- Note the need to assess the causes of racially disparate hiring and retention outcomes across Maryland's local school systems. Policy solutions for addressing hiring manager bias at the local level will be markedly different from those seeking to address a lack of racial diversity in enrollment in Education programs across the state
- Note the need to revise curricula at both the prek-12 and postsecondary education levels to be culturally relevant, responsive, and/or affirming, as well as the benefits of such instruction for all racial groups
- Highlight the need for preparation of all school-based staff in non-exclusionary student behavior development models such as Restorative Approaches and preventative models such as Trauma-Informed and Responsive practices. If implemented and assessed at the post-secondary education level, an opportunity for cost-saving on the state's part may exist. Otherwise, grant funding and technical assistance for plan development and implementation should be provided to local school systems

Policy Area 3: College and Career-Readiness Pathways

- Include provision to prevent the inequitable distribution of high-paying, high-demand career and technical education programs across the state
- Develop a sample prekindergarten through 12th grade trajectory as a model for the intended implementation of new College and Career Readiness pathways—at present, many questions still exist about the impact these will have on elementary and secondary students, staff, curricula, and necessary resources
- Require the presence of multiple representatives on the CTE Committee of the Governor's Workforce Development Board from various empirically excluded groups (women, business owners of color, Black leaders in STEM, etc.)
- Note that programs which result in industry-recognized credentialing shall not discriminate against students based on citizenship status, irrelevant involvement with the Department of Juvenile Services, or any other circumstances which are not directly related to the nature of CTE study
- Include the need for specific supports and programming for students with specific circumstances, including but not limited to: first-generation college-going status; DREAMer or other immigration status; housing stability status; foster care status; students with incarcerated family/caretaker(s); and expectant and parenting students

- Support and promote existing programs to service specific student populations, such as the Unaccompanied Homeless Youth and Foster Youth Tuition Waivers

Policy Area 4: More Resources to Ensure All Students Succeed

- Explicitly call for the full funding of existing programs such as the Thrive by Three Fund, Ending Youth Homelessness Act, and other community-based opportunities for students and their families to receive wrap-around services to complement those provided at school
- Acknowledge the need to update Maryland's School-Based Health Center standards in tandem with the deployment of health services practitioners in high-poverty schools
- Note the need to assess whether schools serving high concentrations of students who are learning English require additional resources, regardless of the students' income status
- Note that "newcomer status" for students who are learning English should last for an entire calendar year, not reset at the conclusion of an academic year
- Acknowledge that the Commission did not delve deeply into the needs of/produce recommendations for groups such as students experiencing housing instability, those in foster care, those who are expectant or parenting, etc. Leaving these and other student groups unaddressed implies that no further work will need to be done to address these students' needs or assess their outcomes
- Explicitly state that Community Schools are to be implemented at the community level: that is to say, the Community School Coordinator position should be filled by an individual embedded in the community they're serving; as should partnering organizations. Special considerations may be required to ensure equitable, effective implementation
- Explicitly note that while race-based funding may not be acceptable under the Constitution, precedent does exist which allows governments to target funding to close disparity gaps in student achievement

Policy Area 5: Governance and Accountability

- Note that withholding targeted student funding from local school systems should not be a strategy used to ensure compliance, especially not for low-wealth and/or systemically underfunded school districts
- Explicitly cost out the implications of a delay in implementation—there are real-world costs to current and future students for every year officials choose to delay implementation and dedicated funding. Those costs should be made clear to aid decision-making
- Clarify that students, families, and school-based staff should be core components of decision-making teams throughout the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the Commission's recommendations. Meaningful school community engagement should become a standard of Maryland's public schools and can be expected to spillover into positive school climate, decreased uses of exclusionary discipline, and increased student achievement
- Include multiple student, family, school-based staff, and similarly representative positions on the independent oversight board
- Include experts in racially equitable policy implementation and evaluation on the independent oversight board
- Include the use of disaggregated suspension, expulsion, and other relevant student discipline/arrest data in school and local school system evaluation and rankings

Funding Formula

- Implementation of the new funding formula should be accompanied by a thorough assessment of the historical funding trajectory of each jurisdiction, from both the state and local level. This kind of analysis is critical to prediction of the efficacy of new dollars in systemically underfunded districts, which will undoubtedly take longer to see the gains more-resourced districts will reap relatively quickly. A report detailing the backfilling required by local school systems and the opportunity cost of underfunding school systems at both the state and local level will also serve to mitigate sensationalized media blowback against the Commission, its work, the General Assembly, those school systems, and student groups
- The current funding formula must provide additional supports to local jurisdictions which are expected to increase (and in some cases even double) their share of contribution to education. Local jurisdictions should absolutely increase their commitment if they have been underfunding their schools, but a phase-in period, grant supports, or other assistance must be a part of this process—especially since the Funding Formula Workgroup maintained funding floors which benefit already highly-resourced jurisdictions

ACY recognizes that the work of the Kirwan Commission is nearly at its end and thus, it may be difficult to conduct the amount and level of research required to flesh out each of the above strengthening recommendations. Where the Commissioners may find a recommendation to be daunting or not timely, we ask that the recommendation be noted in the final report as a “generally supported” caveat. This will enable ACY and our partners across the state to advocate for the inclusion of **provisions which will strengthen Maryland’s forthcoming world-class public education system** with significantly more ease than if the Commission made no mention of them at all.

Your decision to speak plainly and clarify the Commission’s intended will can assist future reform efforts long after the report has been published and the body disbanded. Please take advantage of this opportunity before the final report is completed.

Thank you for your effort, time, and attention. ACY looks forward to working with many of you in the 2020 Legislative Session as we continue pushing on behalf of our students, schools, and communities to realize our shared vision of a world-class system of education in Maryland.

Sincerely,



Shamoyia Gardiner
Education Policy Director
Advocates for Children and Youth



C. Tolbert Rowe, MABE Immediate Past President

Statement to the Kirwan Commission on Innovation and Excellence

November 12, 2019

I am Tolbert Rowe, a member of the Caroline County Board of Education, and Immediate Past President of MABE. The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the state's local boards of education, appreciates this opportunity to present our positions, priorities, and concerns regarding the pending policy and funding decisions being considered by the Kirwan Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education.

MABE is honored to be represented on the Commission by former MABE President Joy Schaefer, and greatly respects the dedication and expertise of each member of the Commission. MABE has participated fully in the Commission's work, and supports the thrust of significantly increasing the State's investment in a high performing and innovative statewide system of public schools toward the goal of improving our schools so that our students are as well prepared as students educated in the highest performing school systems in the world.

Local boards of education, through MABE, led the advocacy effort to create the Commission precisely so that an updated adequacy study and other funding and accountability issues could be debated and transformed into legislation to update and improve Maryland's school finance system. Local boards believe that Maryland can and should move forward by adopting meaningful changes to our current school finance system, a system we can all be proud of, but which now dates back to 2002.

Launching Kirwan is a constitutional imperative in Maryland. The Maryland State Constitution requires the General Assembly to:

“establish throughout the State a thorough and efficient system of free public schools; and shall provide by taxation or otherwise for their maintenance.”

The State agreed to uphold its constitutional duty by enacting the Bridge to Excellence Act in 2002. Today, Maryland is poised to reaffirm this duty to our students by enacting and funding the Kirwan Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

MABE is confident that on a timeline not to exceed 10 years, Maryland can renew its commitment to fulfilling its constitutional mandate to fully fund and support the equitable access for all students to an excellent education in all twenty-four school systems. Extending this schedule of funding increases and reforms beyond 10 years is unacceptable. Maryland's nearly 1 million public school students deserve a world class education today.

Thank you for your leadership in developing your recommendations. MABE looks forward to the successful passage of the Kirwan Blueprint legislation in the 2020 session.

Julie Hummer, MABE Legislative Committee Chair
Statement to the Kirwan Commission on Innovation and Excellence
November 12, 2019

I am Julie Hummer, a member of the Anne Arundel County Board of Education, and MABE's Legislative Committee Chair.

MABE views the Kirwan Blueprint for Maryland's Future as a "Call to Action" for the building of a world class education system in Maryland. MABE supports the focus on policy and funding recommendations in the following major policy areas, to ensure that each student is provided with:

- High-quality early childhood education programs;
- High-quality and diverse teachers and principals;
- Access to college and career readiness pathways (including advanced college prep programs and career and technical education that leads to employment); and
- The significant additional state and local resources needed to ensure that each and every student is afforded every opportunity to succeed.

For MABE, the Kirwan Blueprint appropriately focuses on our youngest learners as well as our students on the threshold of moving on to success in college and careers. Local boards recognize the need to invest in high-quality early childhood education. This includes a significant expansion of full-day pre-school, which will be free to for all low-income three- and four-year-olds. These programs are critically important if we are to truly prepare each child to enter kindergarten ready to learn.

MABE supports the Commission's recommendation to count prekindergarten students as enrolled, but also to county them separately for State funding purposes through the implementation phase. Importantly, MABE endorses the Commission's recommendation to define prekindergarten students as enrolled students for purposes of triggering the mandatory local share of funding on a per pupil basis.

MABE and local boards also strongly support the Commission's focus on creating a world-class instructional system which will enable most students to achieve "college- and career-ready" status by the end of tenth grade and then pursue pathways that include early college, Advanced Placement courses, and/or a rigorous career and technical education (CTE) programs leading to industry-recognized credentials and high-paying jobs.

CTE programs are in high demand, and critically needed to prepare our students for success. This is why MABE supports significantly increased state funding to expand and strengthen the system of comprehensive high schools with specialized CTE programs, and specialized CTE high schools, in accordance with local school system priorities and local board governance.

MABE also agrees with the Commission that we should introduce students to career and academic options early, including during middle school to give students the opportunity to take introductory CTE coursework in order to engage their interest and retain them in high school.

Thank you for your vision in providing a comprehensive set of recommendations and reforms to improve school readiness and college and career readiness for our students. MABE believes these programs will prove to have an enormous return on investment for our students, communities and the entire state.

Pamela L. Cousins, Secretary, MABE Board of Directors
Statement to the Kirwan Commission on Innovation and Excellence
November 12, 2019

Good evening, I am Pamela Cousins, a member of the Calvert County Board of Education, and Secretary on MABE's Board of Directors.

Equity, in funding and educational policies and programs, is a top priority for MABE and the local boards we represent. For MABE, educational equity means providing access to essential academic, social, emotional, and economic supports in order to engage each student in rigorous instruction with appropriate educational resources to achieve their highest potential.

Funding equity is necessary to support educational equity, and clear and formal requirements for state and local investments in programs, schools and students are needed to ensure that both of these equity outcomes are achieved. This is why MABE so strongly supports the Commission's recommendations to increase funding for all students, but even more so for students learning English, receiving special education services, from economically disadvantaged households and communities, and struggling learners.

MABE also supports adding a concentrated poverty funding formula to support intensive services for students and their families to enable them to succeed in school, that are coordinated and able to meet the additional needs of students in schools located in distressed communities.

Lastly, MABE strongly endorses the Commission's recommendation to phase-in a new requirement for local governments to pay a local share of per pupil funding for economically disadvantaged students, students receiving special education services, and students learning English. The current funding formulas provide substantial state funding, on a wealth-equalized basis. However, the law includes no mandate that local governments "close the gap" by providing an equitable local share of per pupil funding for these students who need a strong, shared investment of state and local dollars the most.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Maryland's public schools and each and every one of our students.



Thank you, Commissioners, Workgroup Members, and all of Maryland for allowing me the opportunity to speak on the recommendations from Funding Formula Workgroup. My name is McKenzie Allen and I am the executive director of the Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools (also known as MAPCS). MAPCS is a nonprofit organization comprised of charter school operators from across the state. We represent over 22,000 students in 45 schools over six districts.

As I am sure you have heard time and time again, this is a once in a generation opportunity. I have been here, following Kirwan since 2016 and over the years, while we work on the research, recommendations, and workgroups – over 800,000 students have continued to receive inequitable access to education annually, our regressive funding of public education has persisted and the gaps have grown, and over 160,000 students have graduated from Maryland public schools most often without a clear path forward to post-secondary education or workforce readiness. We don't have time to wait. We simply cannot continue to drag our feet on this critical piece of legislation – the future of our state, our economy, and most importantly, our students, are at stake. We have to pass The Blueprint for Maryland's Future now.

Our public charter schools, like all public schools, are extremely excited about the opportunity to have the sustainable, reliable, and equitable funding that Kirwan will provide. When crafting the final bill, we ask that legislators, commissioners, and workgroup members to build legislation that supports all types of public schools. We want to make sure the money flows directly to kids and schools, while protecting the autonomies of individual school-based decision-making. School leaders know what their kids and families need most within the Kirwan categories, and we are so excited about the opportunity to have funding that truly meets students where they are to get them where they need to go. For example, last year's "down-payment" provided much needed support to schools with populations experiencing high concentrations of poverty. Due to the nature of many of our charters' existing programming, our schools were elated to have state and local funding to support the innovative work they are already doing to additionally support students.

With 17 years between the last funding formula, we have allowed an entire generation of children to experience a public-school system that was consciously divested in by our state. Those children were told their futures were not as important as the bargaining, spending, and loopholes that occurred to put us in our current situation. As an organization that represents members of the public-school portfolio, MAPCS is proud to stand arm in arm with the other members of the Coalition and thousands of Marylanders across the state in imploring the 2020 General Assembly to pass the Kirwan programming and funding recommendations.

You have the opportunity to leave a lasting legacy – honestly showing our kids that they are important. That they matter. And, that they are loved. When education is your top priority, the rest will fall into place. This isn't just for our kids, but the greater good of all Maryland. I don't think there is any other choice.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'McKenzie Allen', is written over a white background.

McKenzie Allen
Executive Director, Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools



www.marylandcharters.org

Decoding Dyslexia Maryland



www.decodingdyslexiamd.org

Jeanne Saum, State Leader & Chapter Leader, DDMD Anne Arundel

Winifred Winston, State Leader & Chapter Leader, DDMD Baltimore City

Good evening Chairman Kirwan and Commissioners:

My name is Jeanne Saum and with me is Winifred Winston. We lead the Anne Arundel County and Baltimore City chapters of Decoding Dyslexia Maryland, respectively, and are active members of the Maryland Education Coalition and the Blueprint4MD coalition.

We appreciate your service on the Commission and are here to tell you that **our students, and teachers, cannot wait.** The child that was in Kindergarten when the Commission was formed is now in 3rd grade. **It is critical to comprehensively address and fully fund the Commission recommendations next session.**

I'd like to share an excerpt from Psychologist Steve Dykstra about his experience working with traumatized children:

He said:

“Dr. Donald Meichenbaum’s research shows that the single most powerful predictor of the ability to overcome trauma and survive traumatic circumstances is the ability to read. I work with severely traumatized children everyday--victims of torture, abuse, and every kind of crime and trauma you can't imagine. Do what you can to clothe and comfort them...but understand that teaching them, and especially teaching them to read, is the salvation you have to offer and the salvation they most need. Don't let their poverty, stories, and circumstances distract you from that, not for a minute.”

Sources:

Excerpted from [Dr. Steve Dykstra’s](#) comments on the [SpellTalk Listserve](#) with permission on Nov. 11, 2019.

*Dr. Donald Meichenbaum, Research Director, [The Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention and Treatment](#)
[A Developmental Model of Trauma, Growth & Resilience, The Place for Language & Reading](#)*

Decoding Dyslexia Maryland



Decoding Dyslexia Maryland, and our 15 local chapters, strongly support the following:

- 1. Kirwan funds must supplement not supplant their intended purposes.**
 - a. Language governing supplanting funds should be clearly specified.

- 2. Education funding must include strong accountability and oversight processes and measures that ensure funds are invested wisely.**
 - a. What language will be put into place to ensure funds are spent on evidence based practices tied to student outcomes?
 - b. We suggest that the inspector general's staff include the power to audit curriculum, instruction, interventions and assessments to ensure they effectively prevent and address achievement gaps.

- 3. Spending should be accelerated on the front end of the 10 year plan because "kids and teachers can't wait."**

- 4. Consider an MOE for special education funds.** The federal government does not fully fund special education, which means state and local governments pay the difference. It's not enough.
 - a. What language will be put in place to ensure Special Education funding is adequate, equitable and spent as intended?

Thank you for your consideration of our request.



Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education
Public Hearing
November 12, 2019

The Maryland Assembly on School-Based Health Care welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on the recommendations supporting enhanced health services in schools with high concentrations of poverty, including school-based health centers.

There are currently 86 school-based health centers in Maryland, operating in 12 local school systems. They are staffed and supported by community health providers, primarily local health departments. By design, they are located in schools with high concentrations of poverty and act as a safety net provider, particularly for students who experience barriers to accessing health care services in the community. Through leveraging additional funding, including reimbursement from health insurers including Medicaid, school-based health centers have been able to improve access and quality of care for youth, particularly hard-to-reach and underserved populations and become a key component of the safety net. By providing health services on-site, students experience increased seat time and less absenteeism.

During the 2017-2018 school year, approximately two-thirds of visits provided in Maryland's school-based health centers were for somatic health services, with one-third being behavioral health. School-based health centers also reported providing oral health and case management services throughout the same year.¹

In summer 2018, MASBHC had the opportunity to present before the full Commission as part of a panel discussing the benefits of on-site health and behavioral health services in schools. As you may recall, it was during this time that MASBHC discussed the history of funding for school-based health centers dating back to the late 1990s. Since the late 1990s, the State has awarded \$2.5 million annually in grants to support school-based health centers. At the time funding was first awarded, the State was scheduled to phase-in \$6 million in new funding over a three-year period. Unfortunately, only one installment was ever realized. As a result, local school systems have limited funding options from the State to establish or expand school-based health centers, even where there is an identified need.

We hear from local jurisdictions each year of their desire to establish new school-based health centers and/or expand existing ones to provide additional services, including behavioral health, oral health, and telehealth services. At this time, the biggest obstacle is funding. This is in part due to the

¹ Demonstrating the Value of School-Based Health Centers in Maryland: A Roadmap. Harbage Consulting. 2019.



unique design of school-based health centers – to serve all students, regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay.

Earlier this year, we were very pleased to see the Commission include several recommendations in the January 2019 Interim Report to address the health needs of students. Among the recommendations is the inclusion of \$6.5 million to restore, with an inflationary adjustment, the original promise made by the State to fund school-based health centers across the state those many years ago. In addition, over the past year MASBHC has supported the Commission’s recommendation for the staffing of health care practitioners in schools with high concentrations of poverty.

In early October of this year, we provided the Commission with feedback on the implementation of SB 1030². Based in part on that feedback, MASBHC would like to provide the following comments and recommendations for your consideration moving forward. We understand that many of these items may require statutory changes.

Areas of Focus

\$6.5 million in Additional Funding for School-Based Health Centers: MASBHC’s strongly supports the Commission’s recommendation to increase funding for school-based health centers to \$9 million, fulfilling a promise made by the State over two decades ago. As recommended under Element 4b, this categorical funding will ensure that grant dollars can be directed to schools with the greatest identified need and provide support to the 12 local school systems currently without school-based health centers. In addition, schools that have been unable to expand services to include behavioral health and oral health services will have the opportunity to provide these services on-site.

Strengthen Provisions for Dedicated Funding:

- ***Supplementing & Supplanting Funds for Health Care Staff: MASBHC recommends extending provisions prohibiting local school systems from supplanting funds to all health staff, including nursing aides.*** Under §5-203D(4) of the Education Article, eligible schools are prohibited from supplanting dollars currently spent on employing licensed health care staff such as physicians, physician assistants, and registered nurses. Many local school systems also employ nursing aides to provide certain health services. These individuals are critical, especially in large schools, in maintaining “coverage” in the nursing suite or school-based health center when the nurse is otherwise occupied with other case management functions or called to a health emergency elsewhere in the school building. Therefore, we would recommend extending the provisions prohibiting eligible schools from supplanting funding to include all school health staff, including nursing aides.

² Letter from MASBHC to the Commission dated October 4, 2019.



- **Excess Funding Provision: MASBHC believes dedicated funding for health care staffing should be reinvested in health care services.** MASBHC is requesting that the Commission include in its recommendations an amendment to remove the existing flexibility for health “coverage” under §5-203D(3) of the Education Article. This change would ensure that funding designated for the provision of health care staffing is spent on this purpose.

We understand that the intent of SB 1030 was to ensure that any unspent dollars could be used on wraparound services, which were not funded in FY 2020. However, the recommendations include separate dedicated funding streams beginning in FY 2022 for both health care practitioners and wraparound services (under the per pupil funding allocations). When this happens, the flexibility for health care staffing “coverage” should be eliminated so any unspent dollars can be reinvested to health care services.

- **40 Schools Provision: MASBHC recommends allowing all eligible schools the same opportunity to receive and direct their own funding under the Concentration of Poverty Grants.** §5-203C(1)(III) of the Education Article permits local school systems with at least 40 eligible schools to expend the grant funding on behalf of the eligible schools in their jurisdiction. While we understand the intent of this provision to address possible economies of scale, we have concerns regarding the implementation. This includes how the State and local school systems will track which services are being provided among the 40-plus eligible schools and how funds are spent.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments to the Commission. If you have any questions or need any additional information, please contact Rachael Faulkner, our public policy and governmental affairs consultant. [REDACTED]

Maryland School Based Health Centers

Maryland has only budgeted just over \$2 million for SBHCs annually since the inception of the program more than 20 years ago. When first funded in the late 1990's, the Executive Branch planned to phase in funding over 3 installments to reach \$6 million a year. Only the first installment was realized. At the current level, state funds do not cover the entire cost of running a school-based health center.

Other sources of funding are a combination of:

- State Grants
- Local Dollars
- Medicaid MCO reimbursement and nominal commercial
- Other (local foundations, some federal grants)

In the just enacted Senate Bill 1030 - *The Blueprint for Maryland's Future*, the Maryland General Assembly has set aside approximately \$50 million over the next two years for school-based health centers and school health for schools with a high concentration of poverty. Each qualified school will receive \$248,000 for community school coordinators and primary care clinicians in school-based health centers and school health roles.

When fully enacted, the Blueprint recommendations grant schools with at least 55% FRPM students funding for:

1. Community school coordinator;
2. Health services practitioner; and
3. Per pupil allocation on a sliding scale based on the concentration of students living in extreme poverty (schools with 55% of its students living in poverty will receive 0% of the per pupil amount increasing to 100% for schools with at least 80% of its students in poverty).

In addition, it is being recommended that State funding for school-based health centers be increased to \$9 million beginning in fiscal 2021. This is an additional \$6.5 million over the current FY 2019 allocation (\$2.5 million). This funding will:

- ✓ Increase capacity to address needs of high-risk students
- ✓ Further reduce absenteeism and increases seat time
- ✓ Provide seamless and prompt care when nurses triage and refer to the SBHC
- ✓ Increase the type and breadth of health care services

School Based Health Centers and Academic Success

Our students are coming to school sick, depressed, or with a toothache. They have chronic conditions like asthma or diabetes, or behavioral health problems. They are often without the means to get help or go to a doctor. They struggle to get through the school day, are less motivated to learn, and struggle to pay attention in the classroom. They may not show up for school, missing critical time in school.

However, when education and health come together through school based health centers, great things happen! Problems get addressed where the students are – in school. Outcomes include:

- Increased attendance and student time spent in classroom
- Improved student behavior and decreased disciplinary referrals
- Increased grade point average and test scores
- Lower dropout rates and higher graduation rates
- Improved school climate or learning environment, as reported by students, teachers and parents

Here is what the research says about SBHCs:

Increased attendance and student time spent in classroom

- A study conducted in a northeast city found that screening for mental health issues and referrals to appropriate services significantly reduced school absences and tardies.
- A multi-site evaluation of elementary schools in the Bronx, New York compared students attending schools with and without SBHCs. Access to SBHCs was associated with a significant reduction in the rate of hospitalization and a gain of three days of school for students with asthma.
- A study of SBHC users in Seattle found that those who use the clinic for medical purposes had a significant increase in attendance over nonusers.

Improved student behavior and decreased disciplinary referrals

- A study in two urban high schools in western New York found that students with access to an SBHC were significantly less likely to be sent home during the school day than those who did not have access. The author concluded that SBHCs were able to increase student learning or “seat” time.

Increased grade point average and test scores

- A study of Seattle ninth grade students found that SBHC use was significantly associated with improved attendance, particularly among those students who used medical services. This study also found that SBHC use was significantly associated with grade point average gains, particularly among mental health counseling users. The authors

caution that these impacts were limited to higher risk youth and effect sizes were relatively small.

Lower dropout rates and higher graduation rates

- One study showed that student who visit SBHCs twice a semester are a third less likely to drop out of school.
- Another study showed that students who use SBHCs have higher grade point averages and attendance compared to students who don't use them.

Improved school climate and learning environment

- One study found that students in schools that have a SBHC reported better student and parent perceptions of the learning environment regardless of whether or not the student accessed the SBHCs services.
- A study of students in San Francisco high schools found that SBHC use was positively related to student-reported caring relationships with SBHC staff and school as-sets. The authors noted that the strongest effects were observed for students reporting more than ten visits to the SBHC.
- A study conducted in a large northeastern city found that students in schools with SBHCs rated academic expectations and school engagement significantly higher than students without SBHCs. Although parents in schools with SBHCs rated some of the school environment factors higher, SBHC and comparison teacher ratings did not differ significantly. Later analyses found that, among the schools with SBHCs, middle and elementary students with SBHC access reported greater levels of school engagement and satisfaction with the learning environment than those in high schools. The authors suggest that elementary and middle school families might feel more connected to their schools with SBHCs than high school families.



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October 4, 2019

William E. Kirwan, Chair
Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education
Maryland Department of Legislative Services
90 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Kirwan:

The Maryland Assembly on School-Based Health Care (MASBHC) would like to provide an update on the implementation of SB 1030 and new funding in FY 2020 for health care services in schools with 80% concentrations of poverty. This includes areas of concern that we have identified and recommendations for the Commission's consideration as further funding recommendations are discussed throughout the remainder of this year.

Foundation vs. Categorical Funding

Because resources to establish and expand school-based health centers are scarce, MASBHC strongly believes that funding should be directed to areas with the greatest identified need and where there is support, in concept and infrastructure, from within the school building, greater school system, and community health partners. With this, MASBHC has long supported the existing annual grant process managed by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and has concerns with including new grant dollars recommended under Element 4b into the Foundation/Base funding for local school systems.

Since the late 1990s, MSDE has been responsible for awarding annual grants totaling \$2.5 million. In addition to establishing statewide standards for school-based health centers, MSDE also has existing processes for collecting data, including staffing data and the number of health services delivered, broken out by somatic, mental health, substance use disorders, and dental.

While we anticipate that more jurisdictions will establish school-based health centers beyond the 12 areas where centers currently exist, we also realize that not all school systems will have an identified need that corresponds to their per pupil funding allocation. This is due in part, on the availability of existing community health providers and whether or not students experience barriers to community health services (e.g., uninsured students).

Recommendation: In order to ensure that dollars are distributed to areas with the greatest unmet needs, we are recommending that dedicated funding in the amount of \$6.5 million recommended under Element 4b be included with existing grant dollars awarded by MSDE. This would provide an annual total of \$9 million to support school-based health centers as previously recommended by the Commission. We believe this will ensure greater accountability as MSDE can measure services provided year-to-year.



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Redistribution of Health Services Funding

Under §5-203D(3) of the Education Article, eligible schools are permitted to use excess funds to provide wraparound services if grant funds exceed the cost to employ the community schools coordinator and health care practitioner. Because the 2019 legislation requires “coverage” of certain health care staffing and does not require a specified dollar amount, we are aware of multiple instances where local school systems are diverting as many grant dollars as possible away from the health care practitioner requirement in order to redirect funds to alternative priorities identified by the local school system. From what we have been able to ascertain from the small sample of local jurisdictions we have reviewed, this practice is occurring without the consultation of eligible schools.

In addition, MASBHC is concerned by that the provision under §5-203C(1)(III), which permits local school systems with at least 40 eligible schools to expend funding earmarked for health care staffing on behalf of eligible schools in that jurisdiction. We are very concerned that this provision provides too much flexibility to local school systems to redirect funds to meet currently unfunded priorities or mandates. In addition, while the provision requires local school systems to consult with eligible schools, there is no recourse for eligible schools who disagree with funding decisions by the local school system.

Finally, because of the issues raised above, MASBHC is not aware of any jurisdiction, from those we have reached out to, that has invested new funding into expanding or establishing new school-based health centers. What we have heard is that if an eligible school has a school-based health center with a full-time nurse practitioner on staff, that the school has met the “coverage” requirements set out in the 2019 legislation and funds are then redirected to non-health service projects. This is not due from a lack of requests from school-based health centers or their community partners, who would like to expand services, including behavioral health services, to more schools.

Recommendation 1 – Repeal the Excess Funding Provision: MASBHC is requesting that the Commission include in its recommendations an amendment to the statute to remove the existing flexibility under §5-203D(3) of the Education Article. This change would ensure that funding designated for the provision of health care services is spent on this purpose. SB 1030 allocated \$248,833 in FY 2020 for schools with a concentration of poverty of at least 80%. Of this, \$126,170 is earmarked for a Director of Community Schools position, leaving \$122,633 to ensure full-time health services coverage. This is approximately what the Commission determined would be needed to hire one full-time health care practitioner. With this, we do not believe it was the intent of the Commission or Legislature to redirect funds, but instead to account for any unspent dollars. Given that unspent dollars should be minimal, MASBHC would recommend that any excess dollars from the \$122,633 be allocated for school health services and school-based health centers to offset underfunded items such as additional staffing, supplies, and equipment.

In addition, we believe that as additional wraparound services are funded through the implementation of per pupil funding under the Concentration of Poverty grants, that the need for flexibility during the bridge funding year will no longer be necessary as both health services and wraparound services will have their own dedicated funding streams.



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- **Recommendation 2 – Repeal the 40 Schools Provision:** While we understand the intent of this provision in the 2019 legislation to address possible economies of scale, we do not believe that it can be implemented as intended. We believe this issue should be addressed as soon as possible before more school systems meet this threshold once the Concentration of Poverty grants include schools with 55% or more. Once this happens, MASBHC strongly believes that this provision will further enable school systems to divert funding allocated for health services, including behavioral health services, to other programming with little to no accountability.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments to the Commission. If you have any questions regarding school-based health centers as the Funding Formula Workgroup finalizes its recommendations, please contact Rachael Faulkner, our public policy and governmental affairs consultant. [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

Patryce A. Toye, MD
President

Donna Behrens
Immediate Past President
Chair, Policy Committee



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**Testimony for
Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education
Public Hearing on the Blueprint for
Maryland's Future Funding Formula Workgroup's Recommendations
Tuesday, November 12, 2019**

Maryland PTA is the state's oldest and largest child advocacy organization. It is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities, and a strong advocate for public education. We represent thousands of volunteer members in approximately 900 public schools and are comprised of families, students, teachers, administrators, businesses, and community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and family engagement in Maryland. For 104 years, our mission has been to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

Maryland PTA stands today in partnership with the Coalition for School Funding and the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, a time-limited group of advocates and organizations with the shared vision of ensuring passage of legislation that encompasses the recommendations of the Kirwan Commission along with an updated, adequate, and equitable funding formula that has dedicated revenue sources. We are also a member of the Maryland Education Commission, a group of organizations and individuals dedicated to over thirty years of promoting equal access to high-quality programs and services, adequate and equitable funding for public education, and systemic accountability.

Maryland PTA believes the State must fully fund public education programs to fulfill its constitutional guarantee that all children will have access to a thorough and efficient system of public education. Accordingly, we fully support the recommendations of the Funding Formula Workgroup's recommendations and urge the General Assembly to pass them soonest.

While we appreciate the work of the Kirwan Commission, we also request you consider the following recommendations:

1. Maryland PTA opposes the use of public funds for non-public or private schools, except for state-approved, special needs schools. To take away tax dollars from public schools that are already underfunded would only detract from the work of the Kirwan Commission, decelerate academic progress in our public education system, and violate the public education mandate under the State Constitution. If the State wishes to support non-public, for-profit, and private schools, legislators should develop a grant program that can be administered, monitored, and overseen by State officials.
2. Local jurisdictions should not be given exemptions or waivers from compliance with Kirwan Commission recommendations. The Funding Formula Workgroup has provided provisions to phase-in local jurisdiction funding, and Maryland PTA believes the phase-in provides sufficient time for local jurisdictions to amend local ordinances or legislation as necessary. If a local jurisdiction finds it does

not have an economy to support the Kirwan recommendations, then Maryland PTA suggests using the State's existing guaranteed tax base laws to support those jurisdictions.

3. Finally, Maryland PTA recommends the State Treasurer and State Board of Education closely monitor the implementation of the Kirwan Commission's funding recommendations. It is preposterous to allow ten or more years to pass before we determine the extent to which the State's public education system is underfunded. Someone should sound the alarm before funding levels within our educational system fall into a dilapidated state.

In closing, Maryland PTA appreciates the opportunity to testify at this hearing. We look forward to our continued advocacy with the Coalition for School Funding and the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the Maryland Education Commission, and others to ensure the Kirwan Commission recommendations are passed and that all of Maryland's children get a world-class education.

Respectfully Submitted,

Edna Harvin Battle

Dr. Edna Harvin Battle
President



TESTIMONY TO THE COMMISSION ON INNOVATION AND EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future Funding Formula Workgroup Recommendations

POSITION: Support

BY: Lois Hybl and Richard Willson, Co-Presidents

DATE: November 12, 2019

The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) supports the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Funding Formula Workgroup recommendations for state education aid formulas and believes that the General Assembly must take full and comprehensive action during the 2020 legislative session to enact a funding formula that incorporates these recommendations.

This proposed formula addresses the changing demographic composition of our public school students by including an additional per pupil weight for the concentration of poverty and increasing funding for English learners, students with special needs, and other targeted populations. We desperately need the services that can be leveraged by the Community Schools Coordinators funded by the concentrated poverty weight. The recommendations also recognize the research-based importance of early education by including a weight for full-day PreK for low-income 3- and 4-year old children. Other commendable provisions include additional resources for teachers, mental health workers and other services to reduce the negative influence of social problems on children's ability to learn. The proposed allocations for Career and Technical Education are desperately needed to improve options and opportunities for students wanting to pursue a career track.

We propose two changes to the Workgroup recommendations. First, we recommend increasing funding on the front end versus the back end of the 10-year implementation timeline. While the proposed timeline allows more time for implementation planning, it puts off significant increases until very late in the implementation process, thus delaying when schools receive the resources they need now. Also, delaying funding rests on assumptions of anticipated growth in the out-years that may not materialize. We suggest a compromise between the original Commission timeline and the Workgroup recommendations that accelerates the funding increases while accounting for implementation planning.

Second, it is concerning that districts with the largest increase in the local share serve large numbers of diverse and/or low-income students. We recommend an equity audit of the local share of the funding formula and revisions based on that audit. We also recommend finding mechanisms (e.g., guaranteed tax base) to help low wealth districts meet their local share obligations.

LWVMD has supported a foundation program based on a weighted per pupil formula supported from general state revenues at a level high enough to eliminate inequities since 1972. Maryland League members have, since the 1950s, understood the importance of the relationship between various revenue sources available to state government and the services

provided by those revenues. To fund the Commission's recommendations, we would support progressive changes to our tax structure. Finally, we support policies that prioritize collaboration across governmental departments and agencies and provide easy-to-access services for children and their families, something the Community Schools provisions address.

Providing adequate and equitable Pre-K - 12 public education by supporting full funding for the Commission recommendations is one of our highest priorities for the 2020 General Assembly. LWVMD with 1400+ members urges the Commission to support a funding formula that phases in the recommendations of the Blueprint as quickly as possible because the cost of not investing in adequate and equitable funding for public education is too great.

MARYLAND COALITION TO REFORM SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

By Email

November 11, 2019

Dr. William (Brit) Kirwan, Chair
Commission on Innovation & Excellence in Education
PreK-12InnovationandExcellenceCommission@mlis.state.md.us

Dear Chair Kirwan and Members of the Commission on Innovation & Excellence in Education:

The Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline (CRSD) is comprised of 23 member organizations committed to making school discipline practices in Maryland schools fair, appropriate, and designed to keep youth in school and on track to graduate. Since our inception in 2014, we have worked to eliminate disparities in the use of exclusionary discipline in public schools and to shift state-level policy to reduce the use of exclusionary discipline methods in schools overall. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the recommendations of the Commission on Innovation & Excellence in Education.

Maryland's public schools could be among the best in the world—if the state were willing to address the disproportionate suspension and expulsion of specific student populations. During the 2018-19 school year, the population of students that Maryland school districts suspended and expelled was nearly 59% Black¹— even though Black students were only 34% of the state's total enrollment that year². Maryland's public schools also disproportionately targeted students with disabilities for disciplinary exclusion —they comprised 25% of those suspended, even though they were just 12% of the total student population.

Excessive use of exclusionary discipline is a major factor contributing to the achievement gaps identified early on in the work of the Commission: students cannot be successful when they're being pushed out of school. A positive school climate—which depends on the use of positive, non-exclusionary discipline and limits disciplinary removals —is a critical prerequisite to creating public schools that maximize the potential of every student to achieve academic success. **If Maryland public schools do not curtail the use of exclusionary disciplinary methods and eliminate the existing disparities in who is targeted by these measures, we will never realize our shared vision of a world-class public education system in which all students succeed.** CRSD commends the intensive effort, research, time, and energy put forth by members of the Commission, staff at the Department of Legislative Services, and staff of the Maryland General

¹ Suspensions, Expulsions, and Health Related Exclusions Maryland Public Schools. 2016-2017. <http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/SSP/20162017Student/2017ProdSuspExpulHRExc.pdf>

² Maryland Public School Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity and Gender and Number of Schools. September 30, 2017. <http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/SSP/20172018Student/2018EnrollbyRace.pdf>

Assembly to produce the January 2019 Interim Report. Below are proposed additions to those recommendations which specifically address the disparate use of punitive, exclusionary disciplinary practices:

Early Childhood Education

- Incorporate a focus on social-emotional learning, and positive behavioral development into the standards for early childhood education programs and teachers.
- Ensure that all pre-kindergarten/early childhood education providers in the mixed-delivery system (including public and private) comply with Education Article § 7-305.1, which generally prohibits the suspension or expulsion of students in grades pre-K to 2.

High-Quality and Diverse Teachers and Leaders

- Ensure that pre-service training for teachers and other professionals working in schools includes instruction on restorative approaches and other non-exclusionary methods as a central component of behavior management coursework.
- Ensure that all teachers, including general education teachers, receive disability awareness and competency training in order to effectively identify, accommodate, and program for students with disabilities.
- Require preparation and certification in trauma-sensitive and trauma-responsive approaches for all school-based staff (a precursor to Element 4b of the Interim Report, which would train school staff to recognize mental health issues and others related to trauma).
- Provide funding and technical assistance for local school systems to be used to implement restorative approaches and other strategies for mitigating the use of exclusionary disciplinary methods.

College and Career Readiness Pathways

- Preclude local school systems from using a student's behavior/behavioral record as justification for removing that student from an early college/CTE pathway program.

More Resources to Ensure All Students Are Successful

- Allocate increased funding in the Concentration of Poverty Grants Program to local school systems and schools to support the training, implementation, and evaluation of restorative approaches.

Governance and Accountability

- Require that each local school system's Comprehensive Implementation Plan includes programming, training, and other measures to reduce reliance on exclusionary discipline, and to reduce race- and disability-based disparities in suspension and expulsion.

- Ensure that the oversight body recommended by the Commission monitors the disaggregated school discipline data that each school and school system reports to the state under existing law, and holds them accountable for high or increasing levels of exclusionary discipline and for disparities in disciplinary exclusions across race/ethnicity, disability status, English Language Learner status, gender, and low-income status.

Maryland is on the precipice of implementing an exciting vision for the future of public education. It is imperative, now more than ever, that we ensure the success of this endeavor by adopting policy changes to address our shortcomings in both the use of punitive, exclusionary discipline methods and its disparate impacts on specific groups of students. We urge the incorporation of these recommendations into the final report by the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education. If we truly wish to make Maryland’s schools “world class,” as has been the stated goal of the Commission, then we simply cannot afford to ignore the critical role that comprehensive school discipline reform must play in that work.

Sincerely,



Monisha Cherayil, Legislative Chair
Coalition to Reform School Discipline

Organizational Members

ACLU of Maryland
Advocates for Children and Youth
The Arc Maryland
Attendance Works
CHOICE Program – University of
Maryland, Baltimore County
Disability Rights Maryland
Family League of Baltimore
NARAL – Pro-Choice Maryland
Positive Schools Center – University of
Maryland School of Social Work
Project HEAL – Kennedy Krieger Institute
Public Justice Center
Restorative Response Baltimore
Sayra & Neil Meyerhoff Center for
Families, Children, and the Courts
Teachers Democracy Project
University of Maryland, Carey School of
Law – Youth, Education, and Justice
Clinic

Individual Members

Mark Booker
Lindsay Emery
Natasha Link
Shamarla McCoy
Janna Parker
Gail Sunderman



November 12, 2019

To: Brit Kirwan, Chair & Members, Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education

From: Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland
Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM) appreciates the opportunity to comment on The Blueprint for Maryland's Future Funding Formula Workgroup's ("the Workgroup") recommendations. On behalf of almost one million students, and 75,000 educators and other professionals who fall under our responsibility, we thank the members of the Workgroup and the Commission for their tireless efforts to improve Maryland's educational system. When fully implemented, the recommendations of this Commission will place Maryland among the highest-performing systems in the world.

PSSAM supported the policy recommendations outlined in the Commission's January 2019 Interim Report, and we applaud the Workgroup's fidelity to the core principles of those recommendations. We congratulate the Workgroup for its thoughtful development of a more adequate and equitable funding formula, with special attention given to students with special needs, schools with high concentrations of poverty, and resources for Maryland's educators to provide a world-class education.

We also thank the Commission for your advocacy on last year's "Blueprint" legislation. This legislation provided a "down payment" on the Commission's recommendations and confirmed the Legislature's commitment to the Commission's vision. Lastly, we appreciate MSDE's difficult task of distributing the funds to local school systems under an extremely compressed timeline.

Working together with Local Boards and Local Governments

The Workgroup is proposing bold recommendations that significantly change the local and State funding of public education. We seek a robust and progressive formula that considers the unique challenges each jurisdiction faces. While it is our job to advocate for investment in education, we work alongside our local boards and elected officials as they balance education funding with the other services they provide to our communities. In many counties, education funding receives the largest percentage of appropriations; however, year after year, others simply provide the local maintenance of effort funding. Many jurisdictions face decreased revenue due to declining enrollment, and the smallest jurisdictions are uniquely challenged due to economies of scale. We all however, agree that public education must remain a top priority in all jurisdictions.

PSSAM remains the strongest advocate for additional investments into our educational systems. We urge the Commission and the Legislature to recognize Maryland's diverse demographics; specifically, that a "one-size implementation," especially with regard to local funding, will not bring equity and adequacy for every student in the State.

Pre-K

As a very diverse group of twenty-four (24) school systems, many of these recommendations will affect us differently. PSSAM's top priority has been to support State and local funding to provide Pre-Kindergarten for all Maryland's 4-year-old children, including early support and interventions for young children and their families. Some school systems already provide Universal Pre-Kindergarten and a recommendation to implement a fee-based system will be challenging. PSSAM supports allowing local systems the option of providing Universal full-day Pre-K without mandating fees.

Per Pupil Weights – Targeted Populations

We strongly support the recommendation to increase funding for targeted populations, especially special education. We question assumptions that beginning in FY 2024, each jurisdiction will realize future savings in special education. While investments in early childhood will also significantly impact student achievement, these projections seem overly ambitious.

Teacher Career Ladder

The teacher shortage in Maryland and across the nation is very real. Conceptually, we support career ladders or performance pay, provided there is guaranteed long-term funding commitment and performance criteria are carefully defined. A more rigorous teacher education and certification initiative is a shared goal; however, the teacher shortage creates affordability and implementation concerns.

Another significant concern is the impact of local labor negotiations. There are many recommendations that fall within the purview of "negotiable" items such as professional development, working conditions and career ladders, including salary compensation. In addition, requiring local bargaining units to negotiate the compensation and specific steps for the career ladders could lead to disparity between LEAs. We agree with the Workgroup's recommendation to re-examine the Commission's assumptions regarding National Board Certification and the career ladder projections.

Post-College and Career Readiness Pathways (including CTE)

In the last few years, PSSAM and the Maryland Association of Community Colleges have worked very closely to establish an annual MOU outlining various pathways for students to obtain a college and career readiness designation in high school. In fact, the number of students who are dually enrolled in high school and college simultaneously has almost tripled with nearly 12,000 high school students dually enrolled in 2019. In 2013, there was 4,537 who were dually enrolled. We strongly support the Workgroup's recommendations regarding CCR, as it supports the high priority we have placed on our Career Technology Education (CTE) programs to provide increase options for our students.

Retirement

The Workgroup recommended no change to the current funding split between local governments and the State. It is important to point out that the impact will vary across LEAs based on local negotiations, and could create inequities in retaining and attracting teachers.

Maintenance of Effort (MoE)

We support the continuation of a strong and accountable MoE requirement that ensures local boards and local governments are significant partners in education funding. The new recommendations ensure all LEAs will see increases in State and local funding.

In conclusion, we thank you again for the opportunity to provide input regarding these recommendations by the Blueprint Funding Workgroup. We stand as ready partners as the Commission finalizes its work and welcome the opportunity to work together during the legislative deliberations in the coming months.



NOVEMBER 12, 2019

Now Is the Time to Build the Future Maryland Children Deserve

Testimony given before the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education

Great public schools are part of the foundation of a thriving community. They reflect our understanding that every child has something to contribute and embody our commitment to providing the support children need to learn and thrive. The reforms the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education has recommended have the potential to make Maryland schools among the best in the world, reduce barriers that too often hold back Marylanders of color, and strengthen our economy for decades to come.

While Maryland's best schools today demonstrate what is possible when we invest in learning, we have allowed our support for public education to erode over the last decade. As of 2017, only six of the state's 24 school districts were funded at or near the standard lawmakers set in 2002, down from 23 districts that were close to fully funded just before the Great Recession. Scores on state and national assessments improved in the early part of the century, but those improvements stalled as we chipped away at education funding—even as we raised academic expectations. Maryland's underinvestment in schools harms children in every part of our state and hits students of color hardest, with over half of Black students attending a district that is underfunded by 15 percent or more.ⁱ

We now have a rare opportunity to change course and guarantee all Maryland students a world-class education. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future Work Group has recommended an updated school funding formula that would make possible the Kirwan Commission's ambitious policy recommendations:

- Make high-quality prekindergarten available to all children so they can enter school ready to learn
- Bring teacher pay up to the level of comparable professions and increase opportunities for career advancement
- Enable schools in struggling communities to provide the services children need, such as physical and behavioral health care
- Ensure every student leaves high school prepared for college or a well-paying career

These reforms are essential for the success of Maryland's children and our economy. Research shows that strengthening our investments in education can boost children's future earnings, especially for children who grow up in a low-income family. Once fully phased in, the Kirwan Commission recommendations could increase children's future income by up to \$14,000 per year.ⁱⁱ

To realize these benefits, we must begin to implement the Kirwan Commission reforms as soon as possible. While lawmakers took the first steps to make the commission's vision a reality in 2018 and 2019, the bulk of the work remains to be done. The commission should urge lawmakers to enact a comprehensive and fully funded education reform bill in the 2020 legislative session.

The commission should also urge lawmakers to resist any calls to weaken its recommendations through amendment. The fact is, while the commission's recommendations represent an enormous step forward for Maryland children, a stronger package of reforms would bring even greater benefits. Maintaining the commission's original implementation timeline would have meant a better education for more students, sooner. Updating the way the state and counties divide funding responsibilities would have given students in every jurisdiction greater assurance that their schools will have the resources they need. The commission should ensure that lawmakers understand that further delaying or weakening its recommendations would be the wrong choice for Maryland's children.

There is no question that the Kirwan Commission plan is ambitious and will require Maryland to strengthen our support for public schools. A strong educational foundation is essential to build a healthy economy in the long term. We can afford to make the needed investments if we are willing to make smart reforms to our revenue system, such as removing special-interest tax breaks that do nothing to help our economy and fixing our upside-down tax code that asks the least of the individuals with the greatest ability to pay.

The more important question is whether Maryland can afford not to enact the Kirwan Commission recommendations, or to further delay their implementation. Members of the commission have devoted countless hours over three years to develop a package of reforms that will bring enormous benefits to Maryland's children and our economy. Lawmakers should act quickly and boldly in the next legislative session to make those recommendations a reality.

ⁱ MDCEP analysis of school funding data from the Department of Legislative Services and enrollment data from the National Center for Education Statistics.

ⁱⁱ MDCEP analysis of model estimates and data from C. Kirabo Jackson, Rucker Johnson, and Claudia Persico, "The Effects of School Spending on Educational and Economic Outcomes: Evidence from School Finance Reforms," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 131(1), 2016, <https://academic.oup.com/qje/article-abstract/131/1/157/2461148?redirectedFrom=fulltext>; the Opportunity Atlas by Opportunity Insights, <https://www.opportunityatlas.org/>; and the Department of Legislative Services.

Jackson, Johnson, and Persico estimate that for a low-income student, a 10 percent increase in per-pupil funding (sustained over 12 years) raises individual annual earnings by 10 percent. The Blueprint formula recommendation would increase state and local funding for Baltimore City schools by 69 percent, implying approximately a 69 percent increase in earnings for a worker who grew up in a low-income family in Baltimore City. Opportunity Atlas data shows that a child who grows up in a low-income family in Baltimore City will typically earn \$21,000 per year in adulthood. A 69 percent increase in such a worker's earnings would amount to \$14,000 per year.

Statement to Kirwan Commission

Room 120 House Office Building Annapolis, Maryland

November 12, 2019

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Commission,

Thank you for this opportunity to express my opinions regarding your recommendations for improving education in Maryland. I am speaking as a concerned citizen and would like to share three points:

First: I strongly support your report and wish you every success in implementing its recommendations.

Second: Your report has strong support in Maryland as reflected in a recent *Washington Post*-University of Maryland poll that indicates that Maryland residents not only want to see your recommendations implemented, but are willing to pay more taxes to do so. *Legislators can't find a more credible endorsement of a program than someone willing to pay more in taxes to support it!*

Third: Please do not let critics who focus narrowly on limiting funding distract from your core message: *Maryland's educational system needs to be reformed*. You have identified problems in our schools and the steps to fix them. Public officials need to focus on these problems before they decide that the reforms are too expensive.

In 2017, the U.S. Census rated Maryland as the state having the highest median income at \$80,776, yet we spent less per student than 11 other states (according to NEA). Your Commission reports the counterintuitive fact that Maryland spends more per capita in high income districts (\$13,495) and less in districts that have at least 30% low-income families (\$12,279) where needs are greater. The result of this low level and maldistribution of funds is poor performance in national and international tests and that 40% to 60% of Maryland's high school graduates are not college or career ready as reflected in College of Southern Maryland reports that 40% of entering students need remedial classes.

In closing, let me thank you for your hard work and encourage you to continue to focus on the educational needs in our communities. Those truly concerned about future economic growth in Maryland need to know that the way to get that growth is by funding needed reforms. The Governor and the General Assembly need to commit to educational reform by (1) committing to reverse the poor performance of Maryland schools in national and international tests, (2) working with you to find the changes necessary to improve those test scores, and (3) funding those needed changes.

We are a state wealthy enough to pay for the educational reforms needed to create a better world for our children.

Thank you.

This statement prepared and respectfully submitted by:

*Leonard Zuza
Solomons, Maryland.*



**ACLU of Maryland Statement to the
Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education
Public Hearing on the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Formula Workgroup
November 12, 2019**

KIMBERLY R. HUMPHREY, ESQ.
PUBLIC POLICY COUNSEL

The ACLU of Maryland ("ACLU") is committed to advancing the state's Constitutional duty to ensure that every student has the resources required to meet state standards and more importantly, to thrive. This means that public school students must have sufficiently funded educational services, regardless of their zip code. To that end, we encourage further consideration of the following issues so that Maryland can meet its duty:

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DANA VICKERS SHELLEY
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ANDREW FREEMAN
GENERAL COUNSEL

- (1) wealth equalization;
- (2) delineation of services and associated funding for categorical "weights;" and
- (3) an accountability plan that assesses plans, enforces that services are provided as intended, and tracks the impact by defined subgroups to match the federal Every Student Succeeds Act ("ESSA") data.

(1) Wealth Equity and Adequacy

The "thorough and efficient" education guaranteed in Article VIII of the Maryland Constitution has been defined by the courts as an education that is "adequate" to allow students to meet contemporary education standards. Wealth equity and adequacy¹ are hallmarks of the Maryland state education funding formula and must be the primary drivers of foundation and categorical funding decisions. "Adequacy" is the rubric that is used to ensure equitable school funding. The ACLU advocated for and celebrates the inclusion of concentrated poverty grants and the focus on high-quality prekindergarten services for three and four-year-olds.² These aspects are strong policy elements of the plan, but more action is needed to fully meet equity goals. These and other crucial recommendations, including training for restorative practices and an emphasis on diverse leaders and teachers, will not have the desired impact if the vital funding is insufficient and fails to target reforms to communities most in need.

¹APA Consulting, *Final Report of the Study of Adequacy of Funding for Education in Maryland*, Prepared for the Maryland State Department of Education, Nov. 2016, <http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/Documents/adequacystudy/AdequacyStudyReportFinal112016.pdf>, noting that adequacy in terms of school financing means "an examination of the resources necessary to provide districts, schools, and students with reasonable opportunities to achieve state standards."

² The ACLU of Maryland served on the formal Stakeholder Panel of the Maryland State Department of Education and Augenblick, Palaich, and Associates when the state's education formula review began in 2014.

At this stage in the process, there is no recommendation to change the “floors”³ which remain at the inequitable levels of the outdated and ill-performing formula. Wealth equity is achieved when the distribution of state funds is balanced with the local wealth of a jurisdiction. Wealth equity suggests that those districts that are at adequacy would require less state dollars, ensuring sufficient funding is available to meet the adequacy targets of all school districts. A transparent wealth equalization analysis is needed for both the foundation and categorical funding streams to measure the impact of the floors on the state’s ability to meet the needs of all students. The ACLU recognizes that all districts will have to share the burden of costs; however, the state’s assigned costs per district must be realistic to ensure the highest probability of districts meeting the target.

(2) One Maryland: Elevating the Standard and Experience in Underfunded Districts

A clear delineation of services for the foundation and under each of the weighted categories (which the concentrated poverty grants should bolster and provide more of) will ensure adequacy. Further, equity requires specific and intentional services but we see the most detail only in the base funding. We will have less ability to ensure that resources track the needs if need-based programs are not identified and incorporated in the weighted categories.

The ACLU is deeply concerned about the distinct experiences of students from low-income backgrounds, and those of African American and Latinx students.⁴ State data indicates wide disparities in achievement along racial and ethnic lines, which also align with the significant district-level funding disparities. For example, lack of experienced teachers, less exposure to technology, and inadequate facilities are especially pronounced within historically underfunded districts serving the highest populations of African American and Latinx students. Further, both the Maryland Department of Legislative Services and Augenblick, Palaich, and Associates analyses assessed the adequacy gap⁵ per pupil and by school district. Gaps varied widely across the state from no adequacy gap in some counties to a gap of \$4,024 per pupil in Prince George’s County. Today, the \$342 million and \$504 million per year adequacy gap for Baltimore City and Prince George’s County schools respectively (measured by DLS for FY 17) has had a real impact, depriving children of core resources. Continued adequacy and equity reviews are necessary to reverse these trends.

It is worth noting a cautionary tale of the often-touted Massachusetts plan, which has been a cited model throughout Maryland’s review process. In 1993, Massachusetts embarked on a similar journey, sparked by litigation as well, and concluded by tying funding to accountability, providing the basics in education,

³ Minimum state-level funding provided to all jurisdictions, regardless of local wealth.

⁴ Barbara T. Bowman, et al., *Addressing the African American Achievement Gap: Three Leading Educators Issue a Call to Action*, The National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2018, <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/may2018/achievement-gap>.

⁵ The amount a school system falls short of the dollar target established by the current funding formula to be adequate for children to achieve state standards.

and calling on local communities to fill in the differences. Fast forward to 2015 and Massachusetts is battling severe shortages in the state budget formula because the plan did not accurately account for employee health care, or the additional needs of low-income students and English Language Learners (“ELL”).⁶ This experience bears unfortunate similarity to the crossroads Maryland confronts today. Maryland has yet to account specifically for the needs of two of the same categories and has placed the heaviest burden on local share (where wealthy districts benefit from floors), and where costs substantially increase based on the same category of students. If we do not ensure the appropriate allocations and wealth equalization of the categorical funding, we are likely to meet the same fate as Massachusetts – 20 years later with the same gaps in services. Will we address this problem?

(3) Accountability

Finally, accountability for the state’s successful implementation and specific measures is twofold: (1) we must ensure a timely funding pipeline that will include support to district staff leading the system-wide transformations; and (2) require that the equity factors are effectively served by the district plan (i.e. teacher retention practices for diverse representation, etc.). Therefore, a thorough accountability plan should include the following:

- **Equity Audit**⁷ – a tool to identify and address the source of a school or school district’s disparities in achievement, discipline, and/or access to high quality services;
- **Timeline and Guidance** – a strategy of implementation, including definitions and timelines, for each recommendation; and “supplement, not supplant” provisions in enabling legislation to ensure that new dollars support specific new programs; and
- **Community Partnerships** – school community representatives and non-profit organizations working with districts to monitor any gaps in policy, administrative plans and student experience, and ensure that resources align with recommendation goals.

Conclusion

The ACLU has consistently emphasized the targeted investments needed to support marginalized students that experience hardship due to race and/or poverty. This comprehensive plan must be accompanied by an accurate funding plan, detailed oversight, and intentional approach to reforming low-quality services caused by under-investments to finally level the playing field for students.



⁶ Chris Lisinski and Katie Lannan, *Lawsuit: Massachusetts education system violates rights*, Daily Hampshire Gazette, 2019, <https://www.gazettenet.com/Massachusetts-education-rights-lawsuit-26258739>.

⁷ Linda Skrla et al., *Using Equity Audits to Create Equitable and Excellent Schools*. 2009; See also equity audit defined, <http://schoolequityproject.com/app.php?faq>.

**Statement on Implementation of the
Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education Report**

Barbara Jarvis, Baltimore, MD

Nov. 12, 2019

My name is Barbara Jarvis and I am a resident of Baltimore City. I am speaking to you today to urge you to support full funding for the recommendations in the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education Report.

I recently moved to the city of Baltimore from northern Virginia. It is extremely disturbing to me to see the contrast in the quality of public schools between the two areas. My concern about this disparity is further fueled by the fact that my granddaughter is attending, and my grandson will attend Baltimore City public schools, and I want them to have an excellent education through elementary, middle and high school. That should be their, and all children's, right - to have a high-quality public education. Sadly, this right seems to be violated in Baltimore City. This situation is apparently commonly accepted because when I mention to people that I meet that my granddaughter is in kindergarten, the frequent question is "where is she going to school?" with the expectation that my answer is going to be the name of some private school. This is ridiculous and at the same time appalling.

There is a proliferation of private schools in and near Baltimore City, presumably because many parents who can afford private schools elect to enroll their children there due to their concern that the public schools are underperforming. I do not condemn parents who choose private over public because they want a strong education for their children; it is parents' job to do what they think is best for their children. What I do condemn is the fact that Baltimore City's schools have been underfunded and neglected for so long that many parents see no viable alternative, and what I want to see is an infusion of funds and focus as recommended in the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education Report. Wouldn't it be nice for parents who are struggling with private school payments to have public schools they actually want to send their children to? And wouldn't it be nice for parents whose children are attending Baltimore City schools to be confident that their children are receiving an outstanding education in modern facilities?

In regard to the standard, totally predictable mantra that we can't afford to do this, here's an old cliché that bears repeating: where there's a will, there's a way. Anyone whose position is that we can't afford to provide an excellent public education for our children is agreeing to continue to deprive too many kids of a stable future. This, in turn, deprives our cities, counties and state of a future with a fully productive and engaged citizenry. For those who like financial terms, that's bad business, and for those who like societal terms, that's harmful and unhealthy because it maintains the status quo of poverty and crime.

In closing, I ask that you support full funding of this critical priority for our children and the future of the state of Maryland. Thank you.

November 12, 2019

Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education
Dr. William E. Kirwan, Chair
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Dr. Kirwan and Members of the Commission:

The County Commissioners of Caroline County and Caroline County Public Schools are writing jointly to express our concerns about the recommendations of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Funding Formula Workgroup.

Caroline County is lucky to have exceptional partnerships and working relationships between its public agencies, especially between the County government and Board of Education. Our limited resources have required us to be cooperative and collaborative, and as a result, we believe that Caroline County Public Schools gets the most out of every dollar the County provides. We also recognize that increased funding is needed to further student achievement.

The Commissioners and Caroline County Public Schools strongly support the Commission's goal to advance equity. We frequently worry that Caroline County's children, who are proportionately poorer than their counterparts in many parts of the state, do not have access to the same opportunities. We find the current achievement gap unacceptable and know we need to do more to help our minority and English language learner populations achieve their potential. Unfortunately, we do not believe that the workgroup's cost sharing proposal will advance equity.

The funding formula workgroup's recommendations place the highest burden for local funding on the school systems who can afford to pay the least. At the same time, the wealthiest systems, many of whom are also the least diverse systems, have little to no new obligation.

The huge increases in funding for poor jurisdictions like Caroline, Prince George's, and Baltimore City fail to understand that a lack of higher funding historically has been driven by lack of resources, not lack of will. Asking the jurisdictions who can least afford it to do the most will result in service cuts in other areas that will negatively impact public services, including wraparound services our children rely on to come to school ready to learn. Instead of advancing equity, we worry that this will only serve to widen the gulf between wealthy and poor areas of the state and the opportunities provided to children.

We would strongly urge the Commission to consider a smaller local share for counties that receive disparity grants. These grants exist because the state has already recognized that poorer jurisdictions have limited ability to raise the funds necessary for high quality public services from their own local tax base. Even though Caroline County has raised its income tax rate to the maximum and dedicated the majority of these funds for education related expenses, our local revenues will still fall woefully short of our obligations under this funding proposal.

For an example of how greater state investment can drive equity, we would encourage the Commission to look to Delaware. Instead of dividing the responsibility for education funding equally, in Delaware the state funds the majority of educational spending. This has served to level the playing field between rich and poor districts and has resulted in Delaware receiving high marks for progress toward equity.

Additionally, we would request that the Commission look at giving counties credit for funding provided for education-related expenses that are outside of the allocation given directly to the school system. The most significant among these expenses are debt payments on school construction and renovation projects.

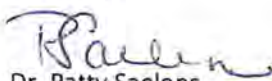
Caroline County is not a resource rich county. However, the Commissioners and school system have consistently worked together to prioritize school construction projects. As a result, school construction and renovation projects will represent more than 86% of County's debt load in the coming fiscal year. This results in a significant investment from the County's annual operating budget to pay this debt service, which has meant the County has less ability to fund above maintenance of effort. This allocation of funds between capital and operating has been the result of joint decision making and prioritization between the County and the Board of Education.

We fear that the unintended consequence of the workgroup's proposal will be the near elimination of school construction projects. As the Commission's recommendations are phased in, a greater and greater burden will be placed on the County's operating budget. Instead of continuing our practice of reinvesting in new school construction projects as each debt is paid off, the County will have no choice but to divert those funds to the local share of its Kirwan obligations.

While our school system does an exceptional job of maintenance, it has significant need for new, expanded schools. The County will simply not be able to afford both its Kirwan costs and to issue debt for new projects unless the Commission's final proposal either significantly reduces the local share of costs or provides credit for expenses like debt service on school construction and renovation projects.

In summary, Caroline County Public Schools and the County government support efforts to advance equity and ensure our students are ready to compete on a global stage. We believed deeply in the power of public education to transform not only individual lives, but the trajectory of whole families and communities. However, we fear that the current proposal will not move our community ahead, but instead will leave us behind and struggling as the gap between rich and poor is only made more stark.

Sincerely,



Dr. Patty Saelens
Superintendent
Caroline County Public Schools



Larry C. Porter
President
County Commissioners of Caroline County

Kirwan Commission Testimony to Maryland House of Delegates
Sean Kennedy, Visiting Fellow, The Maryland Public Policy Institute
November 12, 2019

My name is Sean Kennedy and I am a visiting fellow at the Maryland Public Policy Institute, a nonpartisan thinktank focused on Maryland issues. I am here today to discuss the challenges faced by Maryland's K-12 education system and caution against adopting the "reform" proposals offered by the Kirwan Commission.

To begin, the plan offered – to date – does *not* cost \$4 billion to implement in 10 years. Its real cost, even when accepting the somewhat faulty assumptions of the Commission's own estimates, is a staggering \$32 billion in new spending over 10 years.¹ This figure is certainly an underestimate since the Commission itself revised upwards the net cost in the year 2030 up from \$3.8 to \$4 billion in that year alone.

Furthermore, since more than three-quarters (\$3 billion out of \$4 billion in 2030) of the required new spending goes to personnel – salaries and benefits including pensions and healthcare – the contingent costs will certainly rise faster and higher than the conservative estimates suggested by the Commission.

The spending must be paid for – somehow. Average state income tax rates would have to rise 40% to fund Kirwan or Maryland could almost double its sales tax.

Crucially, only half of the new spending is slated to come from Annapolis's piggy bank. By 2030, \$1.9 billion must come from local coffers. Baltimore City, the jurisdiction with the highest property taxes in the state, would be required to come up with \$330 million more a year – double its current schools expenditure. Similarly, PG County would owe \$360 million more while Montgomery would have to chip in an additional \$263 million by 2030. The only means that local authorities have is to raise these counties' already exorbitant property taxes or local income taxes. Considering the current fiscal woes of PG and Baltimore City, that is a recipe for disaster, population decline, and business flight. For commuter families, Virginia's schools are better and the taxes much lower.

This discussion of costs may seem arcane since Kirwan's purpose is so high-minded, urgent, and necessary. The most recent and disappointing NAEP results for 2019 only ratchets up the temperature on the need to improve Maryland's public education system.

But the Kirwan Commission's conclusion and solution are a terrible misdiagnosis of the education woes affecting the Old Line state and its "cure" is worse than the disease.

The real culprit for Maryland's slipping performance is not insufficient funding. Maryland currently spends over \$16,000 per student per year with four counties in the top 10 spending

¹ <https://www.mdpolicy.org/policyblog/detail/kirwan-backers-earn-f-in-math>

districts in the entire country.² Those four large counties enroll well over half of Maryland's K-12 students – and yet, two of them are among the worst performing in the state.

Money is not the solution and Kirwan's means of spending it only grows the problem. Seemingly unknown to 80% of Marylanders and their elected representatives, the lion's share (75%+) of the Kirwan plan funding goes directly to teachers, administrators, and back-office bureaucrats. While investing in quality and motivated education professionals is a worthwhile task, Kirwan does not do that. Instead, it gives an automatic 10% pay hike on top of the anti-meritocratic "seniority" pay scale employed by Maryland school districts. It hires thousands more unionized employees for Pre-Kindergarten and special services and bankrupts' counties and the state as benefit costs compound.

While it offers small incentives to teachers to undergo some professional development, it does nothing to mandate that these rewarded employees have improved or are actually competent. But it does ensure that teachers can teach less – offering teachers 40% of their time for undefined and unstructured "collaboration" sessions.

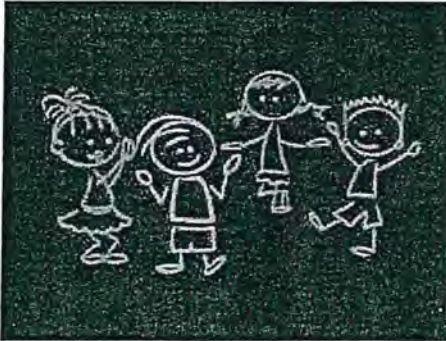
What is rich is that some well-meaning individuals believe that the accountability and structural reforms, apart from the cash injection, will ever be implemented. The teachers' unions contracts are inviolate and cannot be abrogated by a state statute. The Maryland Constitution upholds the sanctity of such contracts and the unions will never allow true accountability to be imposed on their membership.

And I say this as the son of a teacher who spent 40 years teaching and coaching in inner-city Los Angeles: some teachers are underpaid and under-appreciated, but many others are unfit and unqualified. Under current union contracts, those individuals are un-fireable and grossly overpaid.

But these "rotten apples" who fail to teach effectively, are compensated with gold-plated pensions, and never face accountability will remain in place. This proposal is an extremely costly, myopic, and futile enterprise.

² <https://conduitstreet.mdcounties.org/2019/05/21/four-maryland-jurisdictions-rank-among-top-ten-in-u-s-per-pupil-spending/>

Opinion: Kirwan plan is a union cash grab; taxpayers get the tab



MARYLAND COMMISSION ON INNOVATION & EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

Interim Report

January 2019

Key recommendations of the Kirwan Commission on Innovation and Excellence and Education

(<http://dls.maryland.gov/pubs/prod/NoPblTabMtg/CmsnInnovEduc/2019-Interim-Report-of-the-Commission.pdf>) include wide ranging changes on how teachers are recruited, trained and paid, including major increases in salaries attached to a new career ladder. This is in response to the overall difficulty of attracting people to teaching and the loss of 50% of new teachers by their fifth year.

The proposal has broad support from education advocates and the teacher's union. In the commentary below, Sean Kennedy of the Maryland Public Policy Institute, a free-market think tank, takes strong issue against the proposals.

MarylandReporter.com (<http://MarylandReporter.com>) welcomes comments at the bottom of this article, and we will also be happy to publish opposing points of view. Send any commentary or articles about the Kirwan Commission to Maryland Reporter Editor Len Lazarick at Len@MarylandReporter.com (<mailto:Len@MarylandReporter.com>).

By Sean Kennedy

Maryland Public Policy Institute

The Kirwan Commission's real aim is hiking teacher pay by \$3 billion a year, and it is why the state teachers' unions are so strongly backing it – more teacher pay. Kirwan aims at “making teacher salaries more competitive with other professions.”

The teachers' unions, whose membership and coffers would boom, have even launched an expensive lobbying campaign (<http://parentcoalitionmc.blogspot.com/2019/09/teachers-to-mount-lobbying-campaign-to.html>) to pressure political leaders to enact Kirwan's pay hikes.

But Maryland's teachers are not underpaid. Yes, some teachers, who are paid on a seniority rather than a performance basis, earn somewhat less than professionals with similar education and experience qualifications.

But most are highly overpaid. In aggregate, when all compensation (benefits, leave and job security) is accounted for, the average teacher earns as much as 40% more than those in comparable private sector professions (https://www.heritage.org/education/report/assessing-the-compensation-public-school-teachers#_ftn57).

No teacher shortage

Another false “crisis” that Kirwan's massive pay hikes seek to remedy is the “teacher shortage,” with many teachers allegedly fleeing the profession (<https://www.baltimoresun.com/education/bs-md-teacher-turnover-20190903-fk72wh2w4ybcfyxwprhdxxvzy-story.html>). This is belied by the facts. Under 10% of Maryland's teachers retired, quit, or were fired last year – less than half the leave rates for similar professional jobs. (<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/jolts.tot4.htm>). And they left the profession at a much lower rate than teachers across the country (<https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/understanding-teacher-shortages-interactive-2016>).

Maryland already spends a whopping 93 cents of every public K-12 education dollar on personnel (i.e., teachers and administrators) – not on instructional materials, facilities, or technology. That is the highest share by far in the country and 11% higher than the U.S. average (82%) (<https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/ipedsdatatools/quickfacts/quickfacts.asp?bridge=quickFacts&tableid=16&level=State&year=2015-16>).

Statewide, Maryland's per pupil spending averages about \$16,000 per student

(<http://dls.maryland.gov/pubs/prod/InterGovMatters/LocFinTaxRte/Overview-of-Maryland-Local-Governments-2019.pdf#page=102>), but the state's economic and geographic diversity means district-level figures vary widely. Rural Talbot County spends very little compared to even the stingiest of states while Baltimore City spends the third most (\$17,500) of the largest 100 districts nationwide

(<https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/2019/comm/largest-school-districts.html>), while ranking as the third worst in outcomes for all districts (<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/districtprofile/overview/XM?>

[cti=PgTab_ScoreComparisons&chart=1&sub=RED&sj=XM&fs=Grade&st=AB&year=2017R3&sg=Gender%3A+Male+vs.+Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single+Year&tss=2015R3-2017R3&sfj=NL](https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/districtprofile/overview/XM?cti=PgTab_ScoreComparisons&chart=1&sub=RED&sj=XM&fs=Grade&st=AB&year=2017R3&sg=Gender%3A+Male+vs.+Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single+Year&tss=2015R3-2017R3&sfj=NL)). Three other counties – Montgomery, Prince George's and Howard – also rank in the top ten for per pupil spending nationally (<https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/2019/comm/largest-school-districts.html>).

If one adds in the \$5.3 billion in unfunded teacher retirement benefits (for generous pensions and healthcare) that Maryland school districts and state legislature fail to fund, the current real cost of a public school student's instruction increases dramatically.

No meaningful reforms

Those figures are no matter to the teachers' unions and the education bureaucracy who want \$4 billion dollars a year more by 2030 – without meaningful governance or instructional reforms.

To fund the new expenditures, Baltimore City would be required to double its district's spending share (<https://www.baltimoresun.com/politics/bs-md-pol-kirwan-decisions-20191015-fizz4ja6bpbnsjdanhitajyowkfq-story.html>). That would require hiking Baltimore's already burdensome property taxes on homeowners and businesses, driving them out of the city and further shrinking the tax base.

Meanwhile, two recent polls by University of Maryland-Washington Post and Goucher College suggest – erroneously – that Kirwan is a hit with the public. They claim to find that taxpayers are willing to pay higher taxes to improve public education – as if educational excellence can only be achieved through more spending.

But both polls find that over three-quarters of state residents know “nothing” about Kirwan. Seventy-four percent of Goucher's respondents say they support “personally paying more in state taxes to improve [public education] (<https://www.goucher.edu/hughes-center/documents/Goucher-College-Poll-Sept19-Day-1.pdf>).” But Goucher never asks how much.

The Post poll introduces Kirwan's recommendations as “major new programs aimed at improving Maryland's public school system.” Even after such a leading prompt, only a small majority of Marylanders favor raising income taxes by even a quarter percent – which would fund only a tiny fraction of Kirwan's cost – while a majority opposes a half-percent hike. By 2030, income taxes would have to rise by 40% – four times the half-percent increase offered in the Post poll.

[A 2018 poll conducted by the Maryland Public Policy Institute \(https://www.mdpolicy.org/library/doelib/2018/04/Maryland-Public-Policy-Institute-Education-Memo-FINAL.pdf\)](https://www.mdpolicy.org/library/doelib/2018/04/Maryland-Public-Policy-Institute-Education-Memo-FINAL.pdf) found that, when given a choice, voters overwhelmingly oppose more spending as the primary means of improving education: 72% agreed that “to improve learning opportunities in public schools, policymakers should refocus on reallocating resources more efficiently and effectively, instead of continuously increasing the education budget.”

Tough choices avoided

Marylanders – unsurprisingly – want better, high-quality schools on the cheap. The tough choices are simply being avoided by Kirwan's backers; the result would be cuts in other discretionary state and local spending or dramatic increases in income, property, and sales taxes.

Since Kirwan's training, certification, and professional development programming have no consequences for poor-performing teachers or those who fail to improve, nothing will change in schools.

With union protections and a seniority-based pay scale, the rotten apples get the pay bump just the same and the beleaguered students can expect no real benefit.

But the teachers' windfall – higher salaries and plumped up pensions – will carry a dramatic cost.

The Kirwan proposals will put the Old Line State into the red to the tune of \$19 billion and increase the unfunded pension and healthcare liabilities owed by the state by billions more.

Maryland taxpayers will continue to feel the burn for decades to come as these new pay and pension entitlements cannot be easily clawed back unlike the necessary instructional or governance reforms – if those are ever enacted.

Sean Kennedy is a visiting fellow at the Maryland Public Policy Institute, a non-partisan public policy organization based in Rockville, Md.



Testimony of Catherine Carter

SUPPORTING The Blueprint for Maryland's Future Funding

Tuesday, November 12, 2019

My name is Catherine Carter. I am a vision advocate who works on policy and legislative change to improve identification and access to vision care. I am also Project Manager of the Howard County "Beyond 20/20" Program a collaborative public and private partnership that is working to bring awareness and needed eye care services to underserved/uninsured Howard County Public School System ("HCPSS") students. Distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today in favor of ensuring Maryland students in need are given the wrap-around services they need to succeed, including vision care.

Thousands of Maryland children lack access to eye exams and glasses. County vision screenings cover State-mandated grades (pre-K/K, 1st and 8th). In 2017, 38,638 Maryland students were flagged at 80% accuracy that they needed vision care/glasses. State stats and trajectory show that only 30% of students are getting the vision care/glasses they need to see to learn. In the 2018-2019 school year, 861 HCPSS students failed to report any follow up eye care services. In Baltimore City, 11,768 out of 35,078 students screened failed a basic vision screening and over 5,000 glasses were given so students could see to learn. **The Baltimore KIPP school gave eye exams to all their below level reader; 40% were visually impaired. Addressing the vision needs of students is increasing reading scores.**

Barriers to Vision Care in Maryland:

- Lack of transportation, parent engagement, vision awareness, insurance (underinsured/uninsured)
- Lack of enough Medicaid eye doctors, unsustainable provider reimbursement rate of only 30%
- Student eye exam/glasses vouchers require social security numbers
- **0/155 of the Maryland's Health clinics provide eye exams/glasses**



1 in 4 CHILDREN
in the U.S. have a vision
problem that affects
their learning.

Maryland devotes thousands upon thousands of dollars per child to assure that each of them receives the education that she or he needs and deserves. Yet, for far too many children who cannot see the blackboard because they have not received the vision exams and eye glasses (that can be provided for a relatively small amount) these thousands of dollars in taxpayer funds that we already are devoting to their education are not achieving the results that we all desire. And, tragically, for some of these children, their vision issues are unnecessarily leading them toward the even more expensive remediation, special education, or judiciary system.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future Funding for wrap-around services will help initiate public/private partnerships to ensure students can see to learn.



Mission Statement

Let Them See Clearly is a grassroots advocacy that works on policy and legislative changes to improve identification of vision disorders and access to vision care. We successfully got all vision disorders recognized by schools in Maryland and nationwide.¹ We also initiated a Department of Defense Taskforce to initiate protocol that soldiers with Traumatic Brain Injury TBI for visual rehabilitation and vision research funding. This past 2018 Maryland legislative session, we got passed bipartisan legislation to improve parent vision awareness (2018 Atticus Act HB798/SB570) and parent following up after a screening fail (2018 Screening Reporting Bill HB1136). We applaud Maryland and US Department of Education, Department of Defense, and lawmakers for seeing the importance of ensuring our students can see clearly.

Our Story: <https://www.facebook.com/WeAreSeeNow/videos/1440100526108764/>

For many struggling students, the answer may be as simple as a pair of glasses.

25% of students have a vision disorder. However, 70% vision disorders are treatable/preventable, resulting in significant state cost savings. We need to ensure a struggling students' vision and hearing are examined to avoid misidentification and undiagnosed vision/hearing disorders. Currently MSDE policy is to check a K, 1, 8/9th screening to rule out a vision disorder when vision can change at any time, and most vision disorders develop in 2-5th grade, vital years for learning to read. Studies in Boston and Baltimore found that 85% of students failed a vision screening for at least one vision disorder that impacts learning, with highest numbers for students receiving special ed services.² Increasing the number of students getting eye exams will improve student performance, special education cost, and quality of life.

Baltimore City created partnerships to provide eye exams and glasses to students. Doctor Leana Wen, former Health Commissioner at the Baltimore City Department of Health states, "25 percent of our schoolchildren needed glasses, but were not getting them. That's estimated to be 15,000 to 20,000 of our kids who'll end up having to look at the blackboard, and it's blurry, and they don't know why, and think that it's normal."³

Maryland School Vision Screenings (Entering school, first, eight/ninth grades)

- 14.8% of Maryland students failed the vision screening
- Maryland screenings miss at least 50% of vision disorders, performing only 4% of testing done in eye exam
- Only 34% students who fail a vision screening report an eye exam follow up
- Vision for Baltimore (2016-2019)
 - 5,000 glasses and counting
 - 11,768 out of 35,078 students screened failed a basic vision screening
- 6,041 got an eye exam / 4,734 glasses given / 5,727 students still need an eye exam
- 70% of students receiving special education services have a vision disorder⁴
- **98% of incarcerated youth visually impaired at the Baltimore Hickey School⁵**

¹ <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/letter-on-visual-impairment-5-22-17.pdf>

² Orfield, Antonia, OD, MA, FCOVD, "Vision Problems of Children in Poverty in an Urban School Clinic: Their Epidemic Numbers, Impact on Learning, and Approaches to Remediation", 2001

³ <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/08/17/how-free-eyeglasses-are-boosting-test-scores-in-baltimore-215501>

⁴ http://www.oepf.org/sites/default/files/23_4_WALLINE_CARDER.pdf

⁵ Harris, Paul, OD, "Learning-Related Visual Problems in Baltimore City: A Long-Term Program", 2002

Statement on Implementation of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education Report - Jennifer Jarvis [REDACTED]; November 12, 2019

My name is Jennifer Jarvis and I am a resident of Baltimore City. I am addressing you today to urge you to support full funding for the recommendations in the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education Report.

My daughter attends our zoned Baltimore City Public School, Medfield Heights Elementary. Beginning a few years ago as an interested community member, and now as a school-parent, I have observed how hard the principal and assistant principal have worked to hire a guidance counselor, additional special educators, increase the hours of the IEP chair, and finally to hire a part-time librarian. My daughter was so thrilled this year when for the first time she was able to check out a book from the library and bring it home to read; no matter that it was in rough shape and judging from the storyline must have dated from the 90's or earlier, she was so proud of it!

Why is this relevant to our debate over education reform in Maryland? Well, After 63 years in the same decrepit building, Medfield Heights Elementary is getting a new school. We have endured closures due to insufficient heating and air-conditioning, smelly, leaky plumbing and all the other infrastructural indignities of working and learning in a poor school district in this rich state. The school, the PTO, all did their best to make sure that our enrollment wouldn't drop during construction. Meeting after meeting was held to answer questions and concerns about the move. The principal fought tooth and nail for a year to ensure adequate transportation to the swing space for everyone who wanted it, whether they were in-zone or out-of-zone. Letters were sent home explaining that for every net loss of 7 students, one teacher or staff member might lose their job.

Things were looking up as the start of the school year approached, but by the time of the budget adjustment somehow we had still lost 30 students. And so, starting this week in fact, we will lose our guidance counselor, one special educator, the IEP Chair's hours will be cut and, most upsetting to my daughter, we will lose the librarian. As one member of the PTO said in an email announcing the staff cuts, "It's like we're back to where we were a few years ago". And I can't stop thinking about the irony that even as the construction of our new school building begins, we did not have the resources to stop the demolition of our school community.

Why? Why should our students lose some of the stability and support they need during this already hectic and stressful time? Why should years' worth of careful budgeting and sacrifice be wiped away in a matter of weeks, damage that will likely take years to recover from? No piece of legislation is perfect, but for the sake of our society's future we cannot allow the perfect to be the enemy of the good. I have yet to hear a good faith argument as to how this isn't our best shot in a generation to make real and lasting improvements in every aspect of the education system in Maryland. At least, I haven't heard an argument that I wouldn't be ashamed to support. Thank you for this opportunity to speak.



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November 12, 2019

Dr. William E. 'Brit' Kirwan
Chair, Commission on Innovation & Excellence in Education
Blueprint for Maryland's Future Funding Formula Workgroup
House Office Building, Room 121
Annapolis, MD, 21401

To the Members of the Commission:

We at Arts Education in Maryland Schools fully support the Funding Formula established by this workgroup. AEMS believes that the arts are necessary to the growth of the whole child, and it is this concern for the whole child that we believe the Commission understands and acknowledges in their funding formula. Specifically the prioritization of increased funds for SPED and ELL students; for wraparound services for students in high concentrations of poverty; for school mental health services; and for teacher training in cultural competence and restorative practices, these recommendations and more will lead to dramatically better conditions for children whose present and future lives are being damaged and hindered by our status quo. Access to robust arts education is a vital component of giving Maryland's children a high-quality education, and the fine arts play a role in each of the areas prioritized in the Commission's funding formula.

The arts are an important tool in developing spatial reasoning, complex thinking, and self-expression, and provide special education students with pathways to learning that engage them kinesthetically and intellectually. Integrating the arts into other subjects is used to facilitate learning for ELL students as well, giving them multiple modalities through which to synthesize material. Art therapy is a highly successful method of treatment for traumatic stress disorders. Lastly, the arts are an especially important tool in empowering students from marginalized communities to shape their own narratives and to create cultural products that give them agency.

Only about 40% of Maryland's students are graduating high-school at the standard of College and Career Ready; the Commission's recommendations envision a system in which all students leave high-school having reached this standard, or having a plan that keeps them on track to be a productive citizen and contributor to the workforce. This is crucial not just for our students' development but to sustain Maryland's economic prosperity. For students to be college and career ready, they must have the skills and attributes required by businesses, employers, and

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audiences. World Economic Forum includes complex problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, emotional intelligence, and cognitive flexibility in its top 10 skills sought-after by CEOs from 2020 to 2030, all skills cultivated in the arts. These are vital to a thoughtful and dynamic populace and are now explicitly desirable in the careers for which we hope to prepare Maryland students.

Now I want you to close your eyes and envision a classroom where there are no barriers to student learning, where students' needs are met, where schools are an integral part of their communities, led by highly-credentialed teachers, whose time and expertise are valued and rewarded. What are the students doing? What do their classrooms look like? What do their futures look like? We won't see that if we continue to make excuses for not delivering our children the better life and learning environment these recommendations spell out. On September 4th, 2018 Governor Hogan declared that "our children desperately need someone to fight for their civil rights," and AEMS has the highest confidence that the Commission convened under his watch is doing just that. To ignore or undermine this hard work is to be satisfied with inequality and to preside over the continued deterioration of our citizenry. We urge all involved in turning this Commission's work from recommendations into reality to act now and make this happen. Our kids can't wait.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Quanice Floyd', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Quanice Floyd
Executive Director, Arts Education in Maryland Schools (AEMS)

Testimony of Jenny Zito

Kirwan Public Meeting, November 12, 2019

Chairman Kirwan, and Members of the Commission, thank you for hearing my testimony.

My name is Jenny Zito: I am a mathematician, a mother of 3 children (who all went through the public schools system in Anne Arundel County), and a dedicated advocate for good public policy.

I am a strong supporter of the recommendations of the Kirwan commission because they rely on using methods that have already been found to be effective and to have substantial return on investment, and because these recommendations have the moral strength to provide opportunities for all children regardless of the wealth of their parents.

I would like to highlight two programs the Funding Formula workgroup is suggesting receive early funding. These are:

- funding a career and technical education pathway in high school that leads to an industry-recognized credential, and
- funding full-day pre-kindergarten for low-income four-year-olds.

Quality early childhood education and technical training opportunities are the norm in countries whose students score higher than the United States on international tests. For example, in Canada the government has encouraged wonderful partnerships between schools and businesses to allow high school students to get trade certifications and participate in paid internships. This is an investment which has led to improved high school graduation rates, improved salaries after graduation, and industries being able to fill their open positions with qualified new hires.

"A Comprehensive Analysis of Prekindergarten in Maryland" prepared for the Department of Education looked at research from all over the United States concluded that the predicted return on investment of high quality universal pre-kindergarten for 4 year olds in Maryland is approximately 10\$ of return for each dollar invested.

This return on investment is most striking when that investment is made on children who come from disadvantaged homes. An example of this is given by the Perry Preschool Study in a poverty stricken Detroit suburb, which divided 120 children into two groups matched for backgrounds and test scores and provided quality preschool and weekly home visits by a teacher to one group and no services to the matched control group. The children who had received quality preschool were more likely to: do their homework, pass proficiency tests at age 14, graduate from high school, hold a job with good wages, and own their own car and home. They were less likely to be put in special education courses, had fewer teenage pregnancies,

were less likely to receive welfare, committed fewer crimes, and spent less time in jail and prison. Because the state received more taxes and paid less for special education, welfare, and incarceration, they received over 12 dollars return on each dollar invested on these children (by the time the children had reached age 40). Moreover, the individuals themselves benefited by 4 dollars per dollar invested from higher wages.

I know that the Kirwan Commission has been working hard to try to figure out how to fund their recommendations without raising taxes. But I want to say that I support raising taxes if that is what it takes to make these investments in our children and in the financial strength and future of Maryland. We should not let anyone scare us with the costs associated with these fine programs, because the costs of not implementing them are so much higher.

Thank you for your leadership!

Jenny Zito



Maryland Alliance of Justice Reform (Executive Committee Member),
Strong Schools Maryland (Co-Lead Regional Lead for Anne Arundel County),
WISE (Huddle lead Poverty, co-lead Education, past-lead Criminal Justice Reform)

References:

- * "High/Scope Perry Preschool Study through age 40: Summary Conclusions and Frequently Asked Questions" by Schweinhart et.al.
- * A Comprehensive Analysis of Prekindergarten in Maryland
Prepared for Maryland State Department of Education (revised 2016)
<http://marylandpublicschools.org/Documents/adequacystudy/MDPreKComprehensiveAnalysis011316.pdf>
- * National Assessment of Education Progress, In 2017 Maryland ranked 26th in the nation for average high school score (math, reading, science)
- * Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Programme International Student Assessment (PISA) - for 15 year olds carried out every three years in 70 countries. USA ranked 28th in 2015 test for combined scores for mathematics, reading, and science.
- * Top 10 countries for PISA were Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Finland, Estonia, Switzerland, Netherlands, Canada.