



MEMO

To: Joy Schaefer, Moderator of the Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education Work Group 4 and members
From: Strong Schools Maryland
Subject: Recommendations to Specifically Address Race as a Factor in Educational Outcomes of Students
Date: September 25, 2018

As the Commission recognizes, disproportionate negative academic outcomes, based on race and ethnicity have been long documented nationally and in Maryland. Strong Schools Maryland believes that equitable system reforms can be achieved through the Kirwan Commission recommendations. We recognize the Commission's focus to provide robust educational opportunities to all of Maryland's children, especially those who face the challenges of low-income. While recommendations and policy implications related to race reach beyond one workgroup, we value the invitation from Work Group 4 to provide further specific recommendations related to race. While Strong Schools Maryland presents these recommendations, our organization's expertise does not rest in race equity; therefore we support the consultation of experts such as Dr. Ivory Toldson and encourage additional feedback from other experts as well.

Strong Schools Maryland's specific recommendations follow:

Work Group 4: More Resources for At-Risk Students

Recognizing that all of the answers do not currently exist, explicitly acknowledge in the Commission's final report, the powerful, inequitable effect of race and ethnicity on students' educational outcomes in Maryland. Further, note that while there is a strong correlation between the impact of poverty and race, race is an independent variable in the equation around education outcomes. Note that the challenges arise from the system's inadequacy, not the children themselves or the knowledge that exists to provide the necessary supports. Consistent with the discussion between Work Group 4 members at the previous meeting, we recommend that you urge the legislative creation of a high-level body. This body should examine the full range of constitutionally appropriate legislation to eliminate the

opportunity and learning gap resulting from race and ethnicity, in addition to the recommendations already contained throughout the report that address race and ethnicity.

We remain encouraged by the Commission's response to Restorative Practices in the recommendations by including it in teacher education programs and Work Group 4's reference to Restorative Practice. Investment in school climate through Restorative Practice training and implementation help to dismantle the racial inequities associated with expulsions, suspensions and office referrals that disproportionately affect African-American students. We recommend that you augment the current recommendations to ensure a fully funded Restorative Practices (RP) program in every school that earns six or fewer points on the school climate portion of the State ESSA accountability rubric along with the resources necessary to implement such a program.

Strong Schools Maryland appreciates the time and commitment of your efforts to create an equitable system that truly results in positive, comparable outcomes for all of Maryland's children.