



Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education  
c/o Office of Policy Analysis  
Department of Legislative Services  
Legislative Services Building  
90 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

November 13, 2018

Dear Dr. Kirwan and Commission Members,

We are writing to provide recommendations for consideration in the final report of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education.

Each of the signatories of this letter is a board member of a public charter school in Maryland and is committed to the Commission's vision to make *"Maryland a top performing education system in the world and prepare students for the 21st century global economy."* We believe that we can achieve this vision with building blocks that support all students, policies that allow for innovation and accountability, and adequate resources to ensure *all* of our public schools provide a world-class education.

As you finalize your report, we recommend the following:

- 1. Provide Educational Options for Maryland's Children and Families:** A world class education system must include innovative options for Maryland families, allowing them to choose the public school that is right for their child(ren). MAPCS recommends that the Commission highlight public charter schools as a proven option for educating Maryland students -- particularly our at-risk youth -- and recommend a reliable and stable funding formula to support this public school option. Specifically, we ask that the Commission recommend that the legislature does the following:
  - **Codify the Public Charter School Funding Formula:** Codify the State Board of Education's guidance on the funding formula necessary to achieve "commensurate funding" for public charter schools and eliminate the annual changes (and, in Baltimore, decreases) that public charter schools face each year.
  - **Facilities Funding for Public Charter Schools:** To reduce the barriers to entry for new public charter schools and to address the need of current public charter schools to pay for facilities expenses out of their operating budgets, we recommends a new per pupil facilities allocation for public charter schools.
  
- 2. Adequate Funding for ALL Maryland's Public Schools:** We urge the Commission to ensure that all Maryland public schools have the resources necessary to provide a world class education. To

ensure this funding benefits all schools and follows the student wherever possible, we recommend the following:

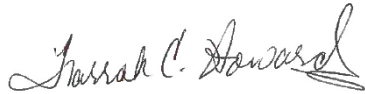
- **Eligibility:** We recommend that the Commission ensure that all public schools (i.e.: traditional, charter, contract, magnet) are eligible for all funding and innovative programming by inserting specific language stating that “all public schools and school systems are eligible” for grant funds.
- **Funding Follows the Student:** We believes that money should follow the student whenever possible. As a result, we recommend that the additional funding -- such as funding for at-risk students -- not be block granted as unrestricted funds to the LEAs. Specifically, we recommend that the funds be restricted and not counted in the overall District revenue similar to federal Title 1 funds.
- **Limit Administrative Costs:** We recommend that the Commission limit the compliance and organizational dollars at MSDE, LEAs or a third party oversight board to ensure the maximum amount of funding possible for students and schools.

**3. Funding for at-risk students:** Every school district in Maryland is impacted by concentrated poverty, defined as a school where 40% or more of the student population is eligible for free-and-reduced-lunch. In Somerset, Caroline and Kent counties, 100% of their schools have concentrated poverty and, in Baltimore, 96% of their public schools have concentrated poverty. We strongly support the Commission’s effort to provide adequate resources for our most at-risk students. Specifically, we support:

- **Concentrated Poverty Weight:** We support the Commission’s current recommendation to provide additional funding for schools with concentrated poverty to “enhance or establish programs and services to support the needs of students in those schools.”
- **Funding Follows the Students:** We support the Work Group’s recommendation that the funds be allocated through a fixed amount to schools with a high percentage of students in poverty combined with a per pupil allocation.
- **Extended Learning Time:** The Work Group on At-Risk Youth recommends an allowable use for additional at-risk funds be “additional extended learning time including before and after school”. We recommend broadening the definition of extended learning time by adding “*and longer school days or years.*” This would ensure that an allowable use for these funds would be to lengthen the school day or year.
- **School-Based Health Centers:** We recommend establishing school-based health centers in schools with high concentrations of students living in poverty and that the centers be established regardless of their “community school” status.

We realize that your task is immense and appreciate your commitment to equity and fairness. We ask that you consider the above recommendations as you finalize your report. Thank you for your consideration and for all of your efforts on behalf of Maryland's students, teachers and schools.

Sincerely,



Farrah Howard, President of the Board of City Neighbors High School



Kuana Holley-Burris, President of the Board of City Neighbors Charter School



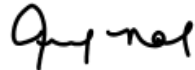
Eric DeVito, Chair of Monarch Academy Anne Arundel Board



Kimberly Flowers, Chair of Monarch Academy Baltimore Board



Amy Duvall, President, MMCI Board of Trustees: Carroll Creek Montessori PCS & Monocacy Valley Montessori PCS



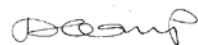
Jen Nail, Southwest Baltimore Charter School



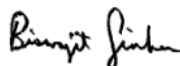
Wrenn Heisler, Chesapeake Charter School Alliance Chair, Chesapeake Public Charter School



Jennifer Schneider, Treasurer, Frederick Classical Charter School



Nkechi Ileka-Adeoye, President, Frederick Classical Charter School



Jit Sinha, President of the Board of Directors of KIPP Baltimore



Brenda Brown Rever, Founder, Baltimore Leadership School for Young Women



Erika Coughlin, President of the Board of City Neighbors Hamilton



Cecil Payton, Empowerment Academy



Jane Donovan, Chair, Crossroads School



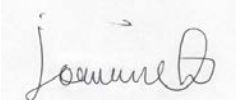
Jason E. Chamberlain, Vice President, Board of Directors Baltimore Montessori Public Charter School



Sarah Sandoval-Mohapatra, President, Board of Directors, Patterson Park Public Charter School



Marvin L. J. Blye, Member, Board of Directors, Baltimore International Academy



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*Carl Stokes*

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