

**Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education**  
*William E. Kirwan, Chair*

**Public Hearing**  
**November 29, 2018**  
**120 House Office Building, Annapolis, Maryland**

**Submitted Testimony List**

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November 26, 2018

To: The Commission on Innovation and Excellence, Kirwan Commission

**Addressing Race Equity in Maryland's Education Funding Formula**

Thank you for the opportunity to resubmit testimony on behalf of Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY). We appreciate the Commission for bringing Dr. Toldson on board as a consultant to push forward the race equity work in education. We would like to reiterate our concerns about the racial inequities in education.

ACY has been engaged with the work of the Kirwan Commission and has addressed ongoing concerns about equity in general, but more specifically as it pertains to race. We have addressed grave concerns over the lack of demographic diversity of commissioners as well as the lack of intentionality in looking at historic underfunding in predominately African American jurisdictions and what costs will be associated with remedying these inequities.

We have had ongoing concerns that community and family engagement has been lackluster as well as engagement with HBCUs in the state and other higher education institutions such as community colleges, that serve a predominate population of African American and Latino students.

LEAs in jurisdictions that have been gravely underfunded and have the most "at risk" schools in the State of Maryland should not have to choose between hiring a new teacher and sending someone to Annapolis to engage with the work of the Kirwan Commission. Therefore:

**We urge the Kirwan Commission to require the State of Maryland to: FULLY FUND A RACE EQUITY COMMISSION** that is comprised of a demographic more reflective of the State of Maryland, in order to create equity in the decision-making process, measure negative externalities in the Kirwan recommendations and proposed subsequent legislation, collect and analyze data and conduct intensive quantitative and qualitative research on racial inequities in Maryland and social impact analysis (SIA). This Commission should be housed in the GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY so that robust policies that address racial disparities can be a measure of accountability for school improvement and performance.

For more information, please contact Javonna Walker at [jwalker@acy.org](mailto:jwalker@acy.org) for a more detailed analysis of race equity in education funding.

Respectfully,

Javonna Walker  
Policy and Communications Associate  
Advocates for Children and Youth

*Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY) is a statewide non-partisan non-profit focused on improving the lives and experiences of Maryland's children through policy change and program improvement. Our multi-issue platform helps us to improve the entirety of children's worlds—the systems they touch, the people they interact with, and the environment where they live.*

**From:** Wendy Muher  
**To:** [Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education](#)  
**Cc:** [education@aclu-md.org](mailto:education@aclu-md.org)  
**Subject:** Kirwan Impact - Baltimore City and all Maryland Students Need A Proper Formula  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 28, 2018 11:09:37 AM

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From: **Wendy Muher**

Dear members of the Kirwan Commission,

Thank you for your time and dedication to this critical initiative. I hope all Maryland residents realize the importance of this outcome and the impact it will have on current students and the next generation of kids starting public school in Maryland.

I am the parent of 6th and 5th graders in Baltimore City public schools. Since they started pre-k, I have been attending funding meetings for city schools both in the city and in Annapolis. The life of an involved Maryland parent is more than just knowing how your own child is doing in math and language arts. I have learned more about how schools get funded than most parents ever have to learn. As a Baltimore City resident, it also means explaining over and over again that our physical schools are aging, that extreme poverty greatly impacts teaching, and that extreme poverty greatly impact social worker needs and after school support needs.

I have been fortunate enough that strong PTOs have helped bridge some (but not all) of the gaps for the students at my kids' schools, when funding has not been adequate. However, paying for a staff member is not something PTO funds should ever have to do. Many city schools do not have the luxury of a strong PTO. An adequate education for all students in Maryland is not a luxury. It's a right. And the prior formula is not providing that right at an adequate measure.

I am hopeful that the next generation of parents will not have to attend seemingly countless funding meetings, and instead will be able to focus on their student's well being, and maybe volunteering at the school with that found time from funding meetings. I have great faith from effort to collect input and come out and listen to our voices across Maryland (I sat in the auditorium at Poly High School for the full 3 1/2 hours), that the Kirwan Commission is putting forth a plan that will be equitable and effective for all Maryland students.

Wendy Muher

Mom to 6th grader at Mount Royal Elem-Middle #66 and 5th grader at Federal Hill Prep #45)

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November 29, 2018

Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education Room  
William Kirwan, Chair  
c/o Department of Legislative Services  
by electronic mail  
PreK-12InnovationandExcellenceCommission@mlis.state.md.us

Dear Chair Kirwan,

As members of Baltimore City Public Schools' Black Teacher Recruitment and Retention Working Group, we are writing to share input related primarily to the High Quality and Diverse Teachers and Schools Leaders working group of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (Kirwan Commission). For the last six months, we have collaborated as teachers, other educators, school district leaders, advocates, and community members and engaged in public conversations with more than 200 individuals in Baltimore.

Our focus has been exploring how to increase the number of Black teachers in Baltimore City Public Schools, which is both at a ten-year high as a percentage of the district's teacher workforce and still significantly lower than it was twenty years ago. The Commission's January 2018 preliminary report mentioned the need to make special efforts to recruit a more diverse teaching workforce and indicated a belief that students benefit from having teachers who "look like me." Research, including a study just named in the *Baltimore Sun* last week, continues to affirm that children benefit from Black teachers. We would like to see the Commission more specifically and explicitly address the needs of Black students and Black teachers.

Our work with this group has uncovered several areas of concern that we hope the commission will address in its recommendations. Our work has focused on Black teachers but many potential strategies would more generally benefit all teachers.

From our work so far, we believe that retaining Black teachers could have an even larger impact on high-quality teacher shortages than recruitment as a lever. In our Working Group discussions, we have heard of concerns that align with national data on reasons that Black teachers leave teaching. Our discussions as well as the implications from those data point us to the following recommendations:

**Teacher Mentoring.** We would like to see significant additional investment in teacher mentoring. The State requires new teachers to receive multiple years of mentoring, but we know that when mentoring duties are on top of a full teaching load, the depth of mentoring that is possible is limited. We also know that in some schools with high turnover, it is sometimes difficult to identify a seasoned teacher to fulfill the mentoring requirement. The demands of teaching across our state are significant, and we know that new teachers need more support. We would like to see funding for full-time mentors, especially in schools serving high numbers of

students living in concentrated poverty. Previous Commission mentions of the Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program in multiple Maryland LEAs aligns have spoken to this interest.

**Understanding Trauma.** In addition to the Commission's recommendation in Working Group #4 that there be training for school staff on understanding trauma, we would like to see funding for strategies that help prioritize relationships and healing from trauma. We would like to see funding for training in culturally responsive pedagogy and relationship building through restorative practices. We'd also like to see adequate investment in social workers and mental health support staff.

**Certification.** We know that the Commission has been interested in increasing the quality of teachers through additional gateway exams for attaining certification. We disagree with this approach and hope that the Commission will focus more on supporting teachers in becoming great through mentoring and minimize requirements for initial certification that have no proven correlation with teacher effectiveness. The Praxis is already a barrier for many Black teachers, and for many other teachers. While we share an interest in raising the bar and the prestige of teachers, we would like to see the certification requirements more closely resemble skills that relate to being a good teacher. The kinds of exams proposed now by the Commission have resulted in a narrowing of teacher preparation courses elsewhere, which is not helpful for creating prepared teachers. Instead of more rigid entry requirements, we need more flexibility to be able to find and support people with a range of talents.

**Black Teacher Pipeline.** We would like to see the Commission extend the Maryland Career Ladder for Educators to include a pathway for paraprofessionals and high school students to become state-licensed teachers. These groups include much higher percentages of African Americans than the current Maryland teacher workforce and the graduates of university-based Maryland teacher preparation programs. We would like to see a funding stream to support students and paraprofessionals who wish to become teachers, including to make higher education more affordable for these individuals with interest in serving as teachers.

Thank you for your work and consideration.

Black Teacher Recruitment & Retention Working Group  
Baltimore City

**From:** Rich Ceruolo  
**To:** [Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education](#)  
**Cc:** [Decoding DyslexiaMD](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Kirwan Commission - Parent Testimony  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 28, 2018 3:22:42 PM

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**Parent Testimony In Favor of Increased Funding For Special Education Services, Dyslexia Screening, Intervention Programs and Enhanced Teacher Training / Certification programs.**

Good afternoon.

I am writing to you today in support of the Kirwan Commission Members recommending increased funding for special education services, dyslexia screening, intervention programs and enhanced teacher training / certification programs.

I am a father of 2 boys, one of them my oldest has dyslexia along with other disabilities.

My son Nick is a student in the Anne Arundel County Public School System and currently attends Magothy River Middle School in Arnold, MD.

My experience over the last 8 years with the special education services offered to children with disabilities while attending AACPS schools has been less than positive.

Many of the programs that are offered to children like my son are underfunded and lack properly trained and certified school personnel. Increased funding for special education services, and teacher training/certification would be very helpful in moving our local school systems forward with identifying and properly servicing the children that need supportive services and assistance from properly training school system personnel.

Without proper special education supports in place, and lacking a solid ability to read at grade level, the futures of most special education students (and all students) would be adversely impacted, limiting their future success and earning potentials. That is unless we change the way we teach children and improve outcomes for all of our children, including those with disabilities, through increased funding for education as a whole.

Please help all of Maryland's children attain their fullest possible potential by increasing the funding levels for special education, dyslexia identification, remediation services and teacher training programs.

I know that working in concert, we can all work to collaborate and create more positive outcomes for all our children, but especially those with disabilities and special needs.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Kind regards,



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Mr. Richard Ceruolo  
3 Carvel Rd. Annapolis, MD. 21409  
(410) 212 - 6001  
[richceruolo@gmail.com](mailto:richceruolo@gmail.com)

On Wed, Nov 28, 2018 at 3:18 PM Rich Ceruolo <[richceruolo@gmail.com](mailto:richceruolo@gmail.com)> wrote:

**Parent Testimony In Favor of Increased Funding For Special Education Services, Dyslexia Screening, Intervention Programs and Enhanced Teacher Training / Certification programs.**

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Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Kind regards,

--

Mr. Richard Ceruolo

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(410) 212 - 6001  
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**From:** Diana Gough  
**To:** [Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education](#)  
**Subject:** Testimony for Kirwan Commission  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 28, 2018 7:47:00 PM

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Dear Sir or Madam:

I am in support of funding early screening and teacher training to address students who struggle with dyslexia and other reading difficulties. My son was tested in 2nd grade by his public school's team, but he did not qualify for Special Education services. I sought out private testing for him in 3rd grade which documented a dyslexia diagnosis. His school then placed him in the Special Education program.

I urge the Kirwan Commission to fully fund more resources for Special Education, universal early reading screening in Maryland, and effective instruction for struggling readers. Teachers need to be trained in the elements and principles of structured literacy. My son's teachers do not know how to address his needs, and I have had to seek help outside of school for him to learn how to read, spell, and write. Regardless of the help he receives via his IEP, he is still reading below grade level as a 6th grader. He feels defeated as his PARCC ELA score has been a 1 since 3rd grade.

In addition to funding training for our current Maryland teachers, I urge funding to incorporate the science of reading and the components of structured literacy in the pre-service programs of the University of Maryland system. We must graduate future teachers who know how to teach reading to students who have dyslexia. My son and many others desire to read with accuracy and fluency in order to access grade level curricula. Your support of more funding for Special Education, early reading screening, and teacher training for current and pre-service teachers will help to close the reading gap and allow all students to be college and career ready upon high school graduation.

Sincerely,

Diana Gough  
Hyattsville, MD  
member of Prince George's Chapter of Decoding Dyslexia MD

- My name is Erin Parker, and I moved to Howard County for its purportedly great schools
- In 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, my son, Gavin, was struggling to read, having trouble paying attention and was not completing assignments
- Gavin refused to write at home and reading was incredibly difficult for him
- He had trouble learning his math facts, despite being gifted in mathematical concepts
- Doing homework turned into a 2 hour battle at night – he would cry and use every excuse not to do the work
- He lacked the confidence to even attempt to spell words
- Most days, his classwork came home blank
- I was worried about an attention disorder or a learning disability
- I raised my concern that he may be dyslexic – as he was still reversing his letters and numbers and if he did write, I saw numerous misspellings and erasures
- His teacher said that the school had removed a phonics program from kindergarten and they were noticing that the children who did not receive phonics who were now 2<sup>nd</sup> graders were all terrible spellers so she wasn't worried about Gavin being dyslexic
- I requested testing for ADHD and learning disabilities but Centennial Lane Elementary refused to do any testing, stating that Gavin had to be at least 1 year behind to qualify for testing b/c of resource limitations
- So I paid over \$2500 for my son to be tested by a private psychologist
- He was diagnosed with dyslexia and dysgraphia
- We attended countless IEP meetings where the school fought the objective evidence that he was dyslexic
- Indeed, the school psychologist, Mary Nalepa, went so far as to blatantly lie about how to read the test results, stating that Gavin's composite scores were more valid than his weaker subtest scores
- I asked her to send me something from a medical journal that supported this statement
- Instead, Ms. Nalepa sent me an article that, in fact, said that when the subtest scores are uneven, like my son's scores, it is misleading to look at the composite scores
- Howard County chooses to mislead parents into thinking their children are ok – rather than address a known learning disability at the critical time in children's schooling
- Not only is Howard County not screening children to try to identify those who may suffer from a reading disability, they are actively concealing the information so that parents cannot effectively advocate for their children
- Even more egregiously, Centennial Lane's principal, Amanda Wadsworth, repeatedly claimed because Gavin was purportedly not a full year behind in reading, he did not qualify as having a learning disability
- This statement is illegal under federal law
- The law does not require us to wait for my son to fail to get him help – particularly when all of the scientific research on dyslexia shows that early intervention is the key to helping these children
- His teacher acknowledged that Gavin was not on grade level for writing – yet the school said there was not sufficient evidence that writing was a weakness for him
- I showed them all of the classwork assignments that came home blank and asked how they could possibly assess that he was writing on grade level when he was barely writing at all
- When he did write, misspellings were rampant and his sentences were incomplete
- The school then revealed that it does not measure whether students are on grade level for writing in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade

- Despite this admission, the school continued to find him ineligible, over its own teacher's statement that Gavin was not writing on grade level
- It would be difficult to find that any child was not writing a year below grade level when no one is tracking writing in Howard County
- 1 in 5 children have a reading disability
- It is no wonder that by the end of 4<sup>th</sup> grade, 40% of children in Maryland are not reading on grade level
- This is the most important skill that kids need to be successful – only 60% of Maryland students are on target for reading (that's a D-)
- We know what to do to help kids with reading disabilities
- Leading experts recommend using the Orton Gillingham methodology – a scientific, evidence-based method that teaches the rules of language in an explicit way
- It invokes students' other senses to teach reading – kids draw letters in shaving cream, clap out syllables, sing songs, play games and use repetition
- It focuses on phonics and phonemic awareness so kids can decode the words
- It uses strategies for reading comprehension
- All children benefit from using this type of program to learn to read – not just kids with dyslexia
- We know what to do to help these kids but our educators are more focused on denying services than helping children
- I was told Howard County does not use Orton Gillingham – nor does it use any type of structured literacy program that would help kids with dyslexia
- Howard County ignores the science and banks on parents pulling their dyslexic children out of the public schools so that they do not have to use their resources to actually teach kids to read
- Up until the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, children are learning to read – once they hit the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, kids are reading to learn and if they can't read, they will be left in the dust
- Howard County has invoked an arbitrary and detrimental rule that kids must not just fail but REALLY fail before they will get any help
- They have decided to wait until it is too late to make any type of meaningful impact on the ability to read
- We need funding to screen children at a young age and identify struggling readers early when we can help them
- We need funding to implement a structured literacy program for children identified as having a reading disability and possibly all children
- We need funding to teach teachers how to teach reading – dyslexic kids aren't going to learn to read through osmosis
- Maryland schools can either continue to get a D- or you can give the funding needed to change the paradigm and educate our children



November 27, 2018

Dr. William 'Brit' Kirwan, Chair  
Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education  
Room 121, House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Kirwan:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments to the Commission. ETS has closely followed the proceedings of the Commission and commends its members for the many hours of hard work. It is evident that the Commission's goal is to improve education and student outcomes in Maryland which is consistent with the ETS mission.

As background, Educational Testing Service (ETS) is a non-profit educational assessment and research organization which provides professional educator licensure and certification assessments nationally. The Praxis program includes a rigorous set of assessments which allows states, including Maryland, to measure a beginning educator's knowledge, skill, and readiness to enter the classroom. Maryland is able to use data provided by the Praxis assessments to make informed decisions about educator preparedness.

As the Commission finalizes its report, ETS would like to provide additional clarifying information for consideration by Working Group 2 which focused on High Quality Teachers and Leaders. The information is related to the pass rates of the assessments required for teacher licensure. Assumptions were made throughout the conversations that current pass rates on teacher licensure assessments in the state of Maryland are unacceptably high and the need for new assessments should be considered. In the section on standards for licensing new teachers, the following language is included:

***Element 2b - Implementation Considerations:***

1. *The State will require a Basic Literacy Skills Test as soon as the test is developed (first-time pass rate in Massachusetts is currently 84 percent) and allow student teacher candidates to retake the test as many times as needed to pass.*

The state of Maryland already requires Basic Literacy Skills tests that candidates may retake as many times as needed to pass. Additionally, ETS would like to provide data for pass rates of the current Maryland Basic Literacy Skills assessments. These pass rates at the current required passing standard represent assessments that are more rigorous than

the Massachusetts assessments which have been commonly used as a benchmark for performance for the state of Maryland.

September 2015-August 2018

<b>Basic Literacy Skills Assessments</b>	<b><u>Percent Passing</u></b>
Core Academic Skills for Educators: Math (5732)	51.94%
Core Academic Skills for Reading: (5712)	82.59%
Core Academic Skills for Writing (5722)	58.93%

2. *The State will roll out more challenging special subject tests tailored to the subjects teachers will teach (for example, English for High School, Math for High School, History for High School, etc.) after implementation of the literacy test. The State or the contracted vendor will develop standards for these exams first and release these standards to teacher preparation institutions four years in advance of when the exam will take effect, so that preparation programs can adapt accordingly.*

3. *Once subject tests are required, test takers can retake the test as many times as needed to pass, if desired. (First-time pass rate in Massachusetts is currently 64 percent).*

According to the data, the state currently has rigorous licensure tests already tailored to the subjects that teachers will teach and aligned to state and national standards. These assessments are rigorous assessments on par with any assessments referenced during the Kirwan Commission proceedings. While there is not a direct correlation for each test required in Maryland, the following pass rates provide important evidence that the current assessments required in Maryland are as rigorous as the Massachusetts program discussed during the Commission proceedings.

<b>Subject Matter Assessments</b>	<b><u>Percent Passing</u></b>
Biology Content Knowledge (5235)	86.69%
Chemistry Content Knowledge (5245)	70.10%
CKT Elementary Ed Reading Lang Arts	77.71%
CKT Elementary Ed Math	82.50%
CKT Elementary Ed Science	91.88%
CKT Elementary Ed Social Studies	62.66%
Earth and Space Science Content Knowledge (5571)	73.08%
Elem. Ed Instr. Practice and Application (5019)	89.72%
English Language Arts: Content and Analysis (5039)	79.16%
Geography (5921)	85.71%
Government/Political Science (5931)	62.50%
Math Content Knowledge (5161)	41.16%
Middle School English Language Arts (5047)	59.62%
Middle School Math (5169)	71.49%
Middle School Science (5440)	84.53%

Middle School Social Studies (5089)	82.76%
Physics Content Knowledge (5465)	71.05%
Social Studies: Cont and Interp (5086)	80.00%
Teaching Reading: Elementary Ed (5203)	92.77%
World and US History Content Knowledge	59.09%

It is the position of ETS, as supported by current data, that the Praxis program provides assessments as rigorous as any assessments offered across the country whether a custom or national program.

We look forward to continuing to work together with the state to address the state needs to ensure a high quality teacher in every classroom.

Sincerely,

Jerry L. DeLuca  
Strategic Advisor

**From:** Jill Flynn  
**To:** [Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education  
education@aclu-md.org](mailto:education@aclu-md.org)  
**Subject:** Public comment  
**Date:** Tuesday, November 27, 2018 3:38:02 PM

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Dear members of the “Kirwan” Commission,

I am writing as a resident of Baltimore City, where my son attends the Mount Washington School. I am also a veteran educator, with more than 20 years teaching at the middle, high school, and college level. As a current teacher educator, I know the importance of preparing and retaining a diverse teaching force focused on equity and inclusion. All Maryland teachers, counselors, and social workers should be trained in cultural competency to meet the needs of our diverse school children. Teachers and school personnel who excel should be rewarded with expanded career ladder opportunities and made to feel valued in the system, helping to retain them

The Commission has made a pivotal recommendation to add funding for schools in concentrated poverty (in addition to per student funding for all students whose families are in poverty). However, that the funding amount may not be sufficient to provide all the staffing needed to address academic, socio-emotional, and enrichment needs in these schools. I personally support recommendations that ensure all school districts, especially those serving high ratios of students of color, get their full amount of funding target.

Thank you for your work. I look forward to hearing how the Commission can help prepare and retain equity-oriented educators and school personnel and how the Commission can help Maryland student, particularly those who have suffered the most from underfunded schools, gain the funding they deserve.

Sincerely,  
Jill Ewing Flynn  
Baltimore, MD



# BOARD OF EDUCATION OF FREDERICK COUNTY

191 South East Street  
Frederick, Maryland 21701

Brad Young  
President

Telephone 301-696-6850  
FAX 301-696-6950

**November 29, 2018**

**Testimony to: Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education**  
**Contact: Joy Schaefer, Member, Frederick County Board of Education**

The Board of Education of Frederick County, which governs a school system of over 42,000 students and more than 5,800 employees, appreciates the work of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (Kirwan Commission) and the opportunity to provide our positions and concerns as the policy and funding recommendations are finalized.

Our testimony is focused on broad issues concerning funding and governance. The recommendations from all the Commission's focus areas – early childhood education, teacher and leaders, college and career readiness, more resources for students with the most need, and governance and accountability – will result in substantive effects on budget, finance, management and governance for all K-12 public schools in Maryland.

## **Finance and Funding**

Our Board applauds the Commission's attention to policy and practice with regards to public education in the State, as well as to the system of school finance. However, in addition to the increased funding required for new practices, attention must be paid to the funding that school systems require to meet current needs. Therefore, the Commission's recommendations should include funding for new practices, but also for those funds needed to ensure a seamless transition for current students and staff.

For example, we support the expansion of early childhood education. Frederick County Public Schools serves several thousand four-year-olds each year in full and half-day programs. We have expanded these opportunities over the years without a per pupil allocation for our prekindergarten students. Therefore, we would support a phased-in expansion of voluntary universal four-year-old pre-K in conjunction with the establishment of a per pupil funding allocation for prekindergarten students. This would include a 0.5 FTE for half-day students and a 1.0 FTE for full-day students, with no off-setting reduction in compensatory education funding.

Another example concerns Career and Technology Education (CTE). We regularly have an annual waiting list that averages 200 students because of our limited capacity to staff programs and inadequate physical space. As an illustration of the changing nature of CTE, the majority of our wait-listed programs are in Biomed and Computer Technology. As the Commission attends to expanding CTE programs, recommendations must also address the deficit in funding statewide.

We have further concern regarding the establishment of a CTE Committee and the cost involved in staffing and supporting this body. Another bureaucracy threatens to siphon away needed resources from students, continuing to limit opportunity and access.



## **Governance and Accountability**

The Board of Education of Frederick County is committed to continued autonomy for all local boards to adopt education policies that promote high standards for academic and fiscal accountability. Students are best served by having an independent local board of education that is engaged with its superintendent and the school community to discuss and to debate important issues that directly impact the quality of education.

We have great concern with regards to several recommendations throughout the focus areas that remove our Board from decision-making. Examples of these concerns include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The goal of a statewide base salary for teachers does not take into consideration local costs of living, comparable salary levels, and local capacity. Further, setting such an amount conflicts with the process of locally negotiated agreements. Our board must balance multiple and complex budget needs, while considering State and local priorities and available revenue. We would suggest a recommendation for a base salary range rather than a single target amount.
- The establishment of a CTE Committee and Standards Board as separate entities is illogical because it shifts regulatory authority and direct oversight of CTE programs from the State Board, MSDE and LEAs. Under the proposed system, boards of K-12 public schools will continue to be accountable for providing meaningful opportunities and high student performance even as we are removed from the governance and decision-making for programs provided and delivered to students we serve. We believe more effective recommendations would instead focus on strengthening the capacity of the State Board, in collaboration with local boards, to work with higher education, business, and professional associations to more fully and comprehensively support CTE programs, enhance, and expand them.
- The proposed Oversight Body conflicts with the authority already held by the State Board of Education. Further, we are troubled that the recommendations regarding this entity reflect a largely punitive role versus a collaborative role, and that accountability is not shared among the many agencies and government entities that have responsibilities for providing necessary resources and services integral to student academic success.

In closing, while guidance and regulations may come from afar, local boards of education are uniquely positioned to govern and make the decisions that directly impact our students, schools and communities. The Board of Education of Frederick County believes that local school boards, through their public process of community-based decision making, are best able to balance educational goals, available resources, community input and to provide academic and financial accountability with regards to student learning and achievement. We stand ready to fulfill this critical role in partnership with the State to ensure the highest quality teaching and learning for each and every one of our students.

November 29, 2018

Dr. Jessica Shiller  
6105 Westcliff Dr  
Baltimore, MD 21209

Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education Room  
William Kirwan, Chair  
c/o Department of Legislative Services by electronic mail  
PreK-12InnovationandExcellenceCommission@mlis.state.md.us

Dear Commissioner Kirwan,

I write to you not only as a private citizen and taxpayer, but as a parent of two public school children and a professor of education who has taught and studied education policy for twenty years. I wanted to begin by commending the commission for putting the spotlight on education equity as an issue that needs attention. My children are not receiving the kind of education that I had growing up because of its slow reduction of schooling to its bare bones- literacy and math. As a teacher and researcher, I see the inequities that schools face depending on the zip code in which they are located. In one of the wealthiest states in the nation, there is no reason that the conditions of schooling should be this way.

I know that you and the members of the commission share my concern about the state of our public schools, but our ways of addressing the problems we face are very different. For me, I think that the people that know the answers to how to solve our problems in schools are the people who are most impacted by the schools- students and teachers. We do not have any students represented on the commission and only one teacher. As a result there have been blind spots, many of which were pointed out in Dr. Toldson's remarks on November 14, 2018. Toldson suggested that the commission pay attention to the stakeholders who were arguing for racial equity, which the commission had overlooked in its initial workgroup recommendations. Racial equity, not just a focus on concentrated poverty, would lead to a redistribution of school funds so that the students in Baltimore, for example, where we have the largest concentration of Black students and of poverty, would not only get their fair share of funding pie, but would also get extra funding to compensate for the many years they received less than their fair share.

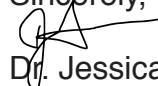
Another blindspot has to do with the issue of the recruitment and retention of a diverse teaching force. Teaching certainly needs to be elevated and salaries need to increase, as the commission recommends. However, research and experience tell us that in order to get the kind of teachers we want, we need to make the conditions of teaching attractive and supportive to people who teach. As a former teacher myself, I wanted three things: (1) A supportive principal (i.e. one that cared about my professional development), (2) A flexible curriculum (i.e. that allowed for cultural responsive pedagogies), and (3) An opportunity to build culture and community with students and families. Richard Ingersoll, an expert on teacher retention, recently showed that teachers of color are leaving at higher rates than white teachers. In order to shift this, we will need more than salary increases. The commission will need to explore what obstacles need to be removed (i.e. high stakes testing, teacher evaluation based on tests) and which supports (i.e. quality professional development) need to be put in place so that principals and teachers can have the freedom to serve students well.

A third blindspot is around how to address struggling students and schools. The commission refers to struggling students as “at risk,” which as Dr. Toldson points out, is a dated term that describes students as deficient. Thus, the solution the commission has suggested is to correct what is wrong with the students. However, another way to approach the issue of struggling students is to broadly examine the root causes why students struggle. To address those causes, the commission will find that students need more than extra tutoring or a higher bar to reach. They need access to regular healthy meals, culturally responsive curricula, and health and mental health services, enrichment programs, among other supports. The community school model comes the closest to this, but even those schools do not provide all that students need.

From where I sit, the commission has had a difficult time. One reason seems to be because it is working from a paradigm that reflects a desire to compete on the global stage. If we are truly going to compete, and I am not necessarily endorsing that as the goal for our schools, we should be asking the people most impacted by schools how to improve them. Teachers and students understand the issues of schools better than anyone. They understand the need for equity, for improved conditions for teachers, and for stronger supports for students.

There are many other issues to discuss, and am happy if I am ever invited to do so. However, for now, I am hoping that you will take these comments into consideration as the commission finalizes its recommendations.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jessica Shiller

Associate professor of education

**From:** John Seelke  
**To:** [Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Testimony on the recommendations of the "Kirwan Commission"  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 28, 2018 11:17:14 PM

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Dear Committee Members,

I am sorry that I am not able to deliver these comments in person as I had a work commitment in my role with DC Public Schools (Manager Secondary Mathematics) as well as teaching a class on Philosophy of Curriculum at Catholic University. However, I am grateful for the chance to provide this written testimony.

As a current parent of elementary school children in Maryland schools, as a former classroom teachers, as a former faculty member in the University of Maryland College of Education who directly worked with teacher preparation, and as a recent PhD graduate whose dissertation focused on the teacher performance edTPA, I approach the work of the Kirwan commission from multiple vantage points. I would like to specifically address three of the recommendations made by the Commission.

First, in relationship to funding Maryland schools, while I understand the need to balance out inequities across the state, I would implore that the Commission seek ways to enhance funding opportunities in other counties without taking away current funding levels. Poverty is everywhere, even in wealthy counties such as Montgomery County. My daughters' elementary school is nearly 50%, a rate that as Dean Rice noted in her presentation could actually be higher if other figures were used as proxies for poverty. Yes, there are other school systems such as Baltimore City or other rural counties that have more poverty than MCPS, However, I encourage the commission to not "Rob Paul to Pay Peter" by taking away funding from one place and providing it to another.

Second, in relation to the FARMS rate as a measure for poverty, I encourage the commission to reconsider ways the state (and thus counties) can encourage diversity within a school or a school system without penalizing the system for having a lower FARMS rate. My daughters' school in Montgomery County was Title 1 10 years ago. Yet as families like my own, and that of Dr. Kirwan's son and granddaughter, chose to attend the school, the FARMS rate dropped, and the school moved from Title 1 to being a "Focus School," receiving some benefits (small class sizes in K-2) but not as many benefits as Title 1 funding. Yes, we need to provide money to those that need it. But in many cases schools feel that the only assured way to receive funding is being a Title 1 school. We need to be sure that the advantages of being a Title 1 school does not lead to a further segregated school system across Maryland with the haves and the have nots.

Finally, in regard to teacher preparation. In my time at Maryland I focused much of my work on the Teacher Performance assessment edTPA, I applaud the commission for choosing to make this assessment a part of the teacher certification process. I would encourage the commission to make sure that this assessment replaces the Praxis II Pedagogy exam. But beyond that, I encourage the Commission to provide funding (funding that right now is not accounted for) to teacher preparation programs to work with local school districts in using edTPA as a tool not just for licensure but also for induction. My own research around edTPA showed connections between the work of the edTPA and that of teacher observations. The University of Maryland was among the earliest adopters of edTPA in the state. Furthermore,

UMD was a leader in connecting edTPA to the K-12 community and demonstrating how the assessment can be used not just as a signature assessment of a prep program but also as a tool to help teachers better succeed in their first year of teaching. Such alignment and support takes time, money and other resources. I strongly encourage the commission to consider funding this aspect of the report.

Thank you for your time,

Sincerely,

Dr. John L Seelke

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*Economic Development Commission  
The County Commissioners of Kent County  
400 High Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Chestertown, MD 21620*

November 29, 2018

Kirwan Commission

Mr. Chairman and members of the commission. Good afternoon. My name is Jim Luff and I am here today representing the Kent County Economic Development Commission (EDC). We strongly advocate for the public-school system and ask that you support full and equitable funding in Maryland.

First, the Kent County EDC strongly supports the public-school system. Part of our strategic plan, is to promote workforce development and education, which provides the skills and training to meet the needs of current and future employers.

Secondly, we are marketing and sharing the successes of our public-school system. One of which is the strong CTE program at the high school. In working with interested businesses and employees, one of the first questions we get asked is “how is the school system”. Everyone wants a great school system for their children. We all want the best teachers; the best facilities; and the best administrators. This requires funding.

Thirdly and perhaps the most significant point is that a superior public-school system **IS** economic development. This topic is important because public school systems are one of the largest employers in rural areas. They have the greatest impact on the local economy and the economic success of a local community is directly tied to the public-school system.

The BEACON School of Business, at Salisbury University conducted a study to identify the economic impact of public-school systems on the Eastern Shore. The school systems provide a wide array of benefits to the residents of each of the counties. In addition to the educational services provided to the students, the expenditures of the school system provide a significant economic impact to the county and region.

The county public school systems on the Eastern Shore average return on investment (economic impact compared to taxpayer investment) is approximately 35%. The return on investment can differ greatly between counties due to their distinct spending patterns.

When examining the Eastern Shore, the return on investment of the county public school systems is approximately 92%. There is also value beyond what can be quantified including quality of life benefits. The economic impact of the public-school systems manifests itself through two channels: 1) the annual impact from operations of

the school systems and 2) the impact generated by the percentage of the employees' payroll spent locally. The public-school systems in each of the nine counties impact both their respective county and the larger Eastern Shore region. In the report, the region generated approximately \$2.5 billion dollars of fiscal impact. The complete report is available on the Kent County Economic Development website.

Finally, I hope you can see the importance of a superior public-school system and the commitment the local EDC has to our schools and our community. It is imperative to our local economies and our children that your final recommendations provide for full and equitable education funding in Maryland.

Thank you for your time.

November 27, 2018

Dear Commission Members,

Thank you for your continued work to improve the lives of Maryland students. Your efforts have the potential to change the lives of all students but will have an exponential impact on students with disabilities. Please consider the following testimony in your discussion and recommendations.

My name is Maureen Mears. I am a resident of Charles County and a parent of a 9th grade public high school student. I am an active member of the community and volunteer my time to raise awareness for the needs of special education students and those with disabilities. I am also a member of Decoding Dyslexia Maryland.

As a mother of a dyslexic child, I have learned to navigate and advocate in a system that was hesitant to acknowledge my child's decoding deficiencies before second grade. The Whole Reading approach, as well as guided reading using leveled reading texts, did not address his need for phonological awareness and sound-symbol association. I sought outside assistance and paid for an independent evaluation. With this information, the school team was able to properly place my child in a structured literacy program so that he could be taught using an appropriate multisensory approach.

I am thankful that my child's team accepted the outside evaluation and was willing to say the word Dyslexia so that his identified specific learning differences could be addressed. I have also been privileged to be able to provide support and instruction at home. Unfortunately, there are many families that do not have the means to pay for outside testing and services. They also encounter a culture that is hesitant to investigate, define, and provide proper instruction for dyslexia. It is essential that there are adequate resources for all Maryland families including trained evaluators and educators.

The work of the Commission can assist in ensuring school districts have the information and resources to assist Maryland students in learning to read. Developing an improved model for screening and identifying students who struggle with decoding skills will have benefits throughout my school system and across Maryland. State reading data show that there is room for improvement. In Charles County alone, there are currently 600 high school students utilizing the Bridge program to meet state graduation requirements because they did not reach a proficient score on the high school PARCC assessment. As the Commission looks for ways to enhance instruction and provide remediation opportunities, the research around dyslexia can provide direction and assistance in reaching your goals. Several counties across Maryland are already using the Report of the Maryland Dyslexia Task Force released in December 2016 as a source for information and recommendations on these issues, yet funding remains an obstacle for implementation.

The state PARCC scores and reports by the State Department of Early Intervention and Special Education Services demonstrate the need for more resources for special education. This



quantitative evidence along with the qualitative stories from Maryland parents indicate a dire need for increased and targeted resources for struggling students. More specifically, an early warning system for struggling students should include universal reading screening of all K-2 students. Effective instruction and professional learning for dyslexia should also be at the forefront of policy decisions so that all students are provided the right to read.

In closing, I kindly request that the Commission consider the needs of all Maryland students as they learn to read. The research and evidence highlight the importance of structured literacy and the road map for program implementation already exists. The Commission can provide the necessary resources to address dyslexia and improve literacy for all Maryland students. Early screening and structured literacy save time, money, and lives.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Maureen Mears  
Charles County

**Michael Raup**  
**msraupjr@gmail.com**  
**Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education**  
**Public Hearing**  
**November 29, 2018**  
**Maryland General Assembly**  
**Annapolis, MD 21401**

The Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education addresses several major areas in its focus on college and career readiness. Undoubtedly, a bachelor's degree will not be possible for some students without spending time first at a community college and then transferring.

Our attention must focus also on the move from community college to the university. Research shows transfer students often face significant issues in their matriculation specifically in the areas of transferability, applicability, and excess credits.<sup>1</sup> Despite Maryland law, some credits do not transfer or apply to a program of study—regardless of what ARTSYS tells students and their academic advisors, pointing to a wider problem of misalignment between courses. These same transfer students end up spending more time and money than they should in college.

In my undergraduate research,<sup>2</sup> I consulted with our state agencies, faculty, and staff on how to improve the articulation process based on my own experiences with the system. Some of the major findings are as follows:

- In the 2008-2009 academic year, only 7% of Maryland community college students managed to transfer to a four year institution and persist toward a degree.<sup>3</sup>
- Over 100 survey responses from students indicated difficulties in transferability, applicability, and excess credits when transferring from community college.
- There is a growing frustration among some university transcript evaluators on the usability of ARTSYS given how difficult it is to input and manipulate data.
- Some senior administrators feel that ARTSYS is outdated and should rely less on manual, human input. The system should be automated, in their opinion.
- Virginia passed HB 3, HB 919 in 2018 for articulation reform that warrants further study.

**The commission should consider including a recommendation in their final report for separate legislation next session to study articulation issues further.** When doing so, this will ensure a seamless alignment exists where faculty and staff at high schools, community colleges, and universities can agree on a core of standardized outcomes among assessment committees to create consistent standards, in light of the commission's other policy recommendations.

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<sup>1</sup> Fink, John, et al. "Using Data Mining to Explore Why Community College Transfer Students Earn Bachelor's Degrees With Excess Credits." *Community College Research Center*. February 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Raup, Michael. "Opinion: System for Transferring Credit Between Community Colleges, Universities Falls Short." *Maryland Matters*. October 1, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> "Students Who Initially Enroll in a Maryland Community College." *Maryland Longitudinal Data Systems Center*. Dashboard.

November 27, 2018

Dear Dr. Kirwan:

We write to offer our thoughts and recommendations for the *Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education* as it nears the end of its work. The *Commission's* work will significantly affect policies that impact teacher recruitment, teaching incentives, and teacher preparation and will determine the education paths for Maryland students, teachers, and schools over the next decade and beyond. As dedicated partners in the work of educating all students for success, the AAT Oversight Council collaborated with the two-year and four-year departments and colleges of education across the State to offer our collective insights, thoughts, and evidence-based recommendations for your consideration.

As you know, the Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT) degree is nationally recognized as a model for recruiting and preparing future early childhood, elementary, and secondary teachers. This innovative statewide articulation model offers opportunities for our State to build a more diverse and effective teaching force that is able to respond to the local educational needs of students and schools. Over 4,000 community college students are currently enrolled in AAT programs in Maryland's 16 community colleges across the State.

As the *Commission* finalizes its work, we urge you to consider the following strategies the AAT Oversight Council has identified to support and strengthen pathways into teaching at both community colleges and four-year institutions:

**Support a culture of collaboration and innovation in Maryland K-12 teacher preparation:**

- Ensure the continuance of the State's AAT 2+2 model with student eligibility to enter a teacher preparation program at a Maryland four-year institution as a junior.
- Provide incentive funding for cross-institutional collaboration and partnerships between two-year and four-year teacher preparation programs and K-12 LEAs in implementing the vision and recommendations of the *Commission*.
- Promote shared PDS sites between community colleges and teacher education programs at four-year colleges and universities.

**Create state-supported incentives and scholarships for teaching:**

- Provide state funded grants and scholarships to students who identify teaching as a career, including students at community colleges who choose the AAT pathway.
- Provide loan forgiveness for all those who enter the teaching profession in the State of Maryland, not just for those who are employed in priority schools.
- Provide financial support in the form of a stipend to teacher candidates during their fieldwork and internship experiences at both two-year and four-year institutions (especially now that the *Commission* is recommending an extended internship).
- Provide funding to cover the costs of teacher candidate assessments, which pose financial hardships for many college students.

**Expand teacher marketing and recruitment efforts:**

- Create a statewide multi-media marketing campaign for prospective teachers and their families to promote the importance of teaching in Maryland.
- Provide funding for middle and high school students to visit teacher education programs at community colleges and four-year institutions throughout the State, and for teacher candidates to visit middle and high schools.
- Establish a tracking system to determine the effectiveness of the Teacher Academy of Maryland (TAM) as a pipeline into the teaching profession.

**Enhance the benefits of a teaching career and improve retention in the field:**

- Increase teacher salaries and expand opportunities for career progression.
- Avoid the placement of beginning teachers in the high needs classrooms and/or schools and provide more time for planning and professional development.
- Create a structured, paid system for teacher candidate mentoring throughout their teacher preparation program, induction period, and beginning teaching career.

Thank you in advance for consideration of our suggestions.



**Dr. Julia Jasken**  
Co-Chair, AAT Oversight Council  
Vice President for Academic Affairs  
McDaniel College



**Dr. Eileen Abel**  
Co-Chair, AAT Oversight Council  
Vice President of Academic Affairs  
College of Southern Maryland

CC:

Robert Caret (USM)  
Nancy Shapiro (USM)  
Bernie Sadusky (MACC)  
Tina Bjarekull (MICUA)  
AAT Oversight Council



Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education  
Public Hearing on Thursday, Nov. 29, 2018  
House Office Building, Room 120  
Written and Oral Public Testimony

Since the very beginning of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education, Maryland PTA has been involved as an integral component while serving on the Commission. Our mission to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children is central to the work of the Commission.

Hence, Maryland PTA stands before you today to independently testify regarding the governance and accountability in the implementation of the Commission recommendations, provide you input on our role and suggest innovative approaches to help make Maryland Public Schools the most successful they can be.

At the outset, any and all recommendations, boards, teams, workgroups, etc., should include the perspective of parents because like soldiers, they are on the ground level experiencing the results of our children being educated in our schools. Parents hear the concerns as well as elations of teachers and most importantly, parents live with, rear, clothe, feed, protect and yes, teach, the same bodies of individuals that namely reflect the success of our schools, the students – our children. Hence, their voice and advocacy are always of utmost importance because schools are a product of the community and the community is derived from families, in addition to businesses, clergy, and other professional and social networks.

After having reviewed the suggested recommendations, Maryland PTA wants to emphasize some important factors that may have been overlooked in terms of oversight, tracking and reporting, closing the achievement gap, progress toward industry credentials, teacher preparation programs, and allocation of funds.

*Maryland PTA advises that implementation of the plan allowed to be conducted in the most creative, innovative and unique way possible.* For instance, if there is a struggling school that is not meeting certain expectations, then perhaps allow a pilot program to exist for low performing schools in addition to pairing them up with high performing schools of similar demographics. Understandably however, physical location may play a strong role on the successful mentorship of vulnerable schools. Hence, local education leaders and oversight authorities may need to consider trying something never tried before in lieu of a lack of mentorship availabilities.

The state currently tracks and reports data but inconsistently. Local boards of education have to be willing to implement or use similar or universal forms of data collection in order to make appropriate comparisons. For example, there is known data to support the statement that kids who are disabled are oftentimes more harshly disciplined than those who are not disabled. Yet, how can that be proven when jurisdictions use various reporting mechanisms that don't identify if a student has a disability. Take referral forms, for example, some counties have forms that indicate whether a student has a disability while others do not. Hence, how can MSDE consistently identify whether disabled students are treated more harshly when referral forms are not uniform or universal throughout the entire state? *Maryland PTA suggests that the Commission be willing to have local boards of education sacrifice a little autonomy so that data may be collected in a uniform fashion and thus produce accurate reports.*

Achievement gaps not only directly relate to school equity in resources but in instructional and hiring practices. On Nov. 12, in John's Hopkins online news, the HUB, writer, Jill Rosen, reported for a particular study that Black students who have one Black teacher are more likely to go to college. The chances increase to 32% if Black students have at least two Black teachers. In general, many education experts believe that the achievement gap, particularly of minority students, suffer as a result of the disparity of ethnically representational teachers. Hence, the hiring of more diverse populations of teachers is a way to address the achievement gap significantly.



At the same token, if minority students perform better with minority teachers, then it may be fair to say that students may succeed more when they are assigned to classes instructed by teachers who use more favorable instructional methods. Thus, students may be better matched with teachers who use certain instructional strategies that are easier for the teacher to use and in turn, are easier for the student to learn. Hence, a teacher who has dyslexia may be a better teacher to students with literacy related disabilities. Or, a teacher who once had ADHD may be a better instructor for students who have ADHD. Again, allowing schools to develop innovative ways to be more accountable to the needs of their students may be a way to close the achievement gap. *Maryland PTA urges that governance be open to such methods to reach the students in any way possible.*

In terms of teacher preparation programs, please involve the teachers and ask them what they believe they need in terms of preparation. It is constantly evident that teachers need training in IEP services and now, restorative practices, has emerged as a tool in the classroom. Yet, with no requirements to teach cursive, the increasing inability for kids to read it is a literacy issue. *Hence, Maryland PTA urges that teacher preparation programs go back to basics and not be so reliant on technology to teach our children but continuously allow for self-reliant opportunities as it relates to curriculum and what teachers should know. The PTA also urges the use of co-teaching with industry professionals because partnership with business, industry, including military, and trade professionals are core to identifying how successful students can apply what they have learned.* It is vital that industry professionals are utilized in holding schools accountable for meeting successful benchmarks. Furthermore, training as well as co-teaching with industry professionals strengthens teaching credentials. Pedagogy along with applied knowledge is very fruitful for students and helps them define a purpose for learning. *Again, Maryland PTA suggests governance over such recommendations pertaining to teacher preparation programs consider the constant need to train in IEPs, incorporate the basics and practical knowledge, and require that entities influencing teaching programs use industry professionals.*

Governance and accountability are also fostered by taking immediate action on existing structures. Currently, there is very little to no use of exit surveys of teachers who either don't have their contracts renewed, move out of the profession of teaching or simply move to another school. This is very important data to collect because teacher retention rates may indicate alternative or unknown reasons why schools may be unsuccessful. Undoubtedly, the relationship between teacher mobility and student achievement is directly correlated. Because the PTA also advocates for teachers, leaders within the PTA acknowledge that the experience of teachers plays a role in the success of schools. For accountability sake, *Maryland PTA recommends that the Commission adopt a recommendation to either survey former Maryland educators of the last 5 years or have local boards of education immediately implement the use of exit surveys of teachers who are no longer teaching within the same school beginning in 2019.* The purpose of this recommendation is to make schools accountable for the reasons why teachers are specifically leaving and to address those problems. It may not be due to salary or lack of prestige.

Furthermore, while whistleblower policies exist in many jurisdictions, they are often not used for fear of retaliation from getting caught. *Maryland PTA would like to see a recommendation that alleviates such a fear and help parents, teachers, administrators as well as students be comfortable about bringing to light policies and practices that hinder a successful educational environment. In terms of allocation of funds, schools or local boards of education can be prioritized based on their successful use of exit interviews in addition to fulfilling the use of developing a strategic plan to implement the Commission's recommendations.* Maryland PTA believes that governance and accountability for implementing any recommendations is conducted best in an atmosphere of transparency, fairness and appropriate consequences.

In closing, the Maryland PTA constantly serves an active role in promoting discussion, communication and understanding within the education community in order to gain a greater understanding of each others' goals and positions. It is why we are Maryland's largest youth advocacy organization and why we serve such a critical voice in the community at large. Thank you for your time this afternoon and we will continue to serve Every Child with One Voice and represent on the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education.

Testimony is presented on the behalf of

Latisha Corey

Latisha Corey, President  
Maryland Parent Teacher Association  
president@mdpta.org



PO Box 716  
Baltimore, MD 21233  
202.669.0031 phone

November 29, 2018

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 extend our appreciation to the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education in supporting the expansion of school-based health services through several recommendations included in the Commission's draft report.

In particular, we would like to thank the Commission for its approval of Elements 4a and 4b. After decades of flat funding for school-based health centers, we believe these two recommendations create a pathway for a needed investment in expanding somatic and behavioral health services to support students with the greatest need. As we have previously shared, school-based health centers are located in schools with high concentrations of poverty and provide on-site health care services to improve access to somatic, behavioral and oral health care where children spend the majority of their day. This in turn can improve academic and health outcomes by increasing access to health and behavioral health care services, reducing absenteeism, and increasing seat time, among others.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments to the Commission. If you have any questions regarding school-based health centers as the Commission finalizes its recommendations, please contact Rachael Faulkner, our public policy and governmental affairs consultant. She can be reached at [rfaulkner@policypartners.net](mailto:rfaulkner@policypartners.net) or (410) 693-4000.

Sincerely,

Patryce A. Toye, MD  
President

Donna Behrens  
Immediate Past President  
Chair, Policy Committee

**November 29, 2018**

Dear Members of Maryland's Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education:

Throughout its work over the last two years, the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education has made clear its commitment to the dual values of adequacy and equity in public school funding. The Maryland Center on Economic Policy respectfully urges that you reaffirm this commitment by recommending a funding formula with a **robust compensatory education weight greater than or equal to the current weight** of 97 percent.

Maryland's current school finance system is neither adequate nor equitable:<sup>i</sup>

- From FY 2008 to FY 2015, the number of school districts funded at or above 95 percent of the standard set by the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act fell from 23 to six.
- Among the nine districts in which more than half of students were eligible for free or reduced-price meals in 2015, none were funded at or above 95 percent of the Bridge to Excellence standard.
- More than half of Black students attended a district that was underfunded by 15 percent or more as of FY 2015, compared to 1 in 12 white students.

Because adequacy and equity are distinct concepts, different policy tools are needed to achieve them. To ensure adequate funding in an era of increasingly ambitious academic standards, it is appropriate to increase the foundation base in our funding formula. Meanwhile, **a robust compensatory education weight is essential to guarantee equity**:

- **Not all students have the same opportunities** or the same needs, which is why we provide additional resources to school districts with higher shares of low-income students.
- Education cost research supports a compensatory education weight **comparable to or higher than our current weight** of 97 percent.<sup>ii</sup>
- The APA consultants' recommendation to reduce our compensatory education weight to 35 percent would **take an inequitable system and make it more inequitable**.
- A **concentrated poverty weight** is essential to address the school-level challenges present when nearly all students are from low-income families. It is **not a substitute** for a robust compensatory education weight.

While a robust compensatory education weight is a necessary condition for funding equity, other elements are needed as well:

- A consistent, accurate measure of low-income status, such as Medicaid-inclusive direct certification
- Wealth equalization to ensure local funding responsibilities are in line with fiscal capacity
- A robust concentrated poverty weight to address the school-level challenges present when nearly all students are from low-income families



- Funding to **identify and remove the specific barriers facing students of color**, above and beyond those associated with low family incomes

This Commission has put in many hours of work to develop reforms that will make Maryland's public schools among the best in the world. To achieve this vision we must move forward on equity, not backward.

Respectfully,

Benjamin Orr  
Executive Director  
Maryland Center on Economic Policy

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<sup>i</sup> MDCEP analysis of DLS Jan. 2017 presentation to the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education, Maryland Report Card data on students receiving special services, and National Center for Education Statistics data on enrollment by race and ethnicity.

<sup>ii</sup> Bruce Baker, "The Emerging Shape of Educational Adequacy: From Theoretical Assumptions to Empirical Evidence," *Journal of Education Finance* 30 no. 3, 2005, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40704236>.



**Maryland Independent College  
and University Association**

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St. Mary's Seminary & University

November 28, 2018

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

Dear Chairman Kirwan and Commissioners:

The Maryland Independent College and University Association (MICUA) appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony to the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education as it concludes its work later this year. MICUA has been following the Commission with great interest over the past two years, particularly recommendations related to PreK-12 teacher preparation, teacher recruitment and retention, and career pathways in the teaching profession. The Commission's recommendations will have a significant impact on the PreK-20 education landscape in Maryland for years to come.

Eleven of MICUA's 13 member institutions offer State-approved teacher preparation programs. These programs include undergraduate degrees, graduate degrees, certificates, and alternative preparation pathways for career changers. MICUA member colleges and universities produce approximately one-third of all newly prepared teacher candidates in Maryland. Over the past nine years, MICUA-trained educators have won local, state, and national awards, including 72 Maryland County Teachers of the Year; six Maryland State Teachers of the Year; two Finalists for National Teachers of the Year; and two National Teachers of the Year.

**We urge the Commission to support and recognize that continued diversity in the size, type, and missions of higher education institutions preparing teachers is in the best interests of Maryland teachers and students.** Recommendations from the National Center on Education and the Economy to limit the number and types of institutions that prepare Pre-K teachers concern us. Among MICUA member institutions, teachers are prepared at comprehensive universities, liberal arts colleges, Catholic universities, a research university, a women's college, and an arts-focused college. We want these institutions and all alternative pathways to be held to high and comparable standards in preparing Pre-K teachers, and we agree that if a teacher preparation program is not performing up to standards, it should not be allowed to operate. Limiting the number of programs based on an institution's size or mission—versus its effectiveness and performance—will not increase the quality or diversity of Maryland's teacher preparation pipeline.

The teacher education community, including the Deans and Directors of Education at both two-year and four-year institutions, has expressed its support for the majority of the Commission's recommendations related to the teaching profession, particularly those that will increase teacher salaries, provide additional supports for new teachers, and enhance the status and visibility of the teaching profession. However, MICUA has serious concerns about: **increasing the teaching internship requirement from 100 days to a full school year; increasing the number of required tests and assessments at the expense of teacher candidates; and prioritizing National Board Certification over graduate-level education for teacher career ladder progression.**

As recognized by the Commission, it is challenging to recruit prospective students into teacher preparation programs. Additional requirements that substantially increase educational cost and time-to-degree will further exacerbate these difficulties. Without accompanying supports such as an expansion of scholarships and loan forgiveness programs, grants to cover the expense of teacher certification assessments, and stipends to support teacher candidates as they complete their teaching internship, we are concerned that the recommendations cited above will have the opposite of their intended effect, weakening the pipeline of Maryland prepared teachers and increasing the State's reliance on teachers prepared elsewhere. Moving forward, we urge a culture of innovation rather than conformity, allowing teacher preparation programs greater flexibility to implement the vision, goals, and recommendations of the Commission.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback. We appreciate your leadership, expertise, and strong commitment to the students and teachers of Maryland.

Sincerely,



Tina Bjarekull  
President

**From:** Jodi Bortz  
**To:** [Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education](#)  
**Subject:** Testimony for Commission  
**Date:** Friday, November 30, 2018 4:45:12 PM

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Hello,

*My apologies that this is a day late. We were turned back westbound at the bridge trying to come to the hearing in person yesterday. The following is my statement regarding the final recommendation of the Kirwan Commission:*

My name is Jodi Bortz. I am a mom, business owner, a founding member of Support Our Schools KCPS, and a Team Leader for strong schools Maryland. I'm writing on behalf of the parents I represent as part of SOS from Kent County.

For as long as my children have been in school, not only has the current formula been underfunding Kent County in our contributions from the state, but it has been used by our local officials to justify gross underfunding at the county level. Our school board has had to lay off too many teachers and support staff. Our administration is staffed at the bare minimum. Our county commissioners pointed to "Maintenance of Effort" and claimed that by giving the bare minimum they were doing a great job. No matter what the educational need, no matter the level of poverty - which in our case is over 50% in every school - no matter the jobs lost.

We were told repeatedly that as long as Maintenance of Effort was met, that we were getting what was required and we should be satisfied. No further "Effort" was required toward equitable and adequate funding, and so they did not try. And with the state formula skewed against a small, declining district with a lot of waterfront real estate, and not a lot of money, our school system suffered. Our administrators have done an amazing job trying to make cuts that don't hurt our students. But... our structures deteriorated. Our talented young teachers left like clockwork for better paying jobs within the first few years of teaching. Our remaining staff put in more and more hours and gave up steps and raises. There is nothing left to cut except more teachers and full scale programs. That is a bridge too far.

We made the case in Kent County that this type of gross mismanagement of our tax dollars, and that a lack of investment in our children and our economic future was unacceptable. On November 6, the voters of Kent County agreed with us, and elected new, pro-education/pro-economic development candidates to our top local seats. This is a sentiment that I've seen in working with others around the state. We can no longer afford to relegate education to the back burner. Now is the time.

I am looking to the commission, not just to lay out what we so desperately need in terms of priorities and financial support, but to ensure that guidance is provided to protect our children from bad politicians at the state and local level in the future. Let your report be the rally to guarantee a brighter future for all of Maryland's children.

Thank you,

**Jodi Bortz**  
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**Bice, Sarah**

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**From:** Sarah Bice  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 28, 2018 3:20 PM  
**To:** Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education  
**Subject:** SpecEd Testimony  
**Attachments:** SeekingEffectPolicies\_SPED.pdf

Dear Kirwan Commission Members:

Thank you for your work thus far. Also thanks so much for the chance to testify via email.

***Your preliminary report from 2018 -- particularly Chapter 1 -- A Call to Action -- was a Godsend in my conversations with neighbors. Truth matters. Thank you for your work.***

We saw first hand the difference a great school district can make when my wife and I had the fortunate chance to enroll our children in DODEA schools from 2015 until 2018, particularly for our neuro-typical child. (We were assigned to live overseas but still kept our house in Montgomery County, Maryland). (DODEA is second after Massachusetts and among the top SAT scores in the Nation) So much better. Why? Higher quality, more caring teachers who were empowered by the administration to act.

For our neuro-diverse child, who suffers with some dyslexia but mostly dyscalculia they were better -- but we eventually decided to home school in our final year. Just wasn't enough one-on-one attention in either system. (Although, thankfully, DODEA can use these words in an IEP -- dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia -- MCPS can only use them ***if you pay for the testing yourself. Also, our child was taught by an actual special ed teacher in DODEA not put in a room alone to have a computer program try to 'teach' our child solo like MCPS. And they actually cared about our child's progress. In addition, MCPS even with an IEP in place there's no way to hold the system accountable for a child's progress.***

Some observations:

1) Immediate adopt Massachusetts State Standards. Why reinvent the wheel? We picked California Emission Standards for God's sake when we wanted cleaner air...Then follow Louisiana's guide -- let the local district choose the specific educational companies to provide the content -- ***but provide State discounts for curriculum that we know works.*** (i.e. Jump Math, the Canadian math program that has put Canada on the math map internationally). Minimize the chance of textbook/media companies bribing our school officials.

2) Inject the latest cognitive research into the classroom. There is not enough of the latest cognitive science in Maryland public schools (every public school teacher should have to go through St. Andrews' School in Potomac's Center for Cognitive Science Program). We need to attract better teachers who actively are trying to get better through the latest research -- and then pay them well once they've shown mastery. Public School hasn't changed since I went through school in the 1970s even though research/knowledge about the brain has progressed exponentially. Also, we are paying enough for our current teachers given the quality of their work; if they want more money/pensions then let's raise their standards like Massachusetts did in 1993. ***Force them to pass subject tests*** -- and put the most experienced in K-5. Yes, we will have a teacher shortage in the beginning. So be it. ***Focus on quality and incentivize teaching at the lower grades to start out.*** Finland puts its most experienced teachers in the lower grades. Remember, it took Massachusetts 25 years to be a world leader...

3) Follow the method to get Special Ed kids close to their peers as detailed in this Rennie Center report from 2009. (attached) The Massachusetts town of Braintree was able to get their neuro-diverse kids within two years on the MCAS testing -- equivalent to Finland. How? By paying teachers to stay after school supplementary tutoring: we pay them for coaching sports teams right? Why not for tutoring? MCPS thinks that would be 'unfair' to the neuro-typical kids -- so they doc the children who are neuro-diverse with 'computer time' (Something that has no basis in cognitive research -- but does have tech money bribing County officials for access to our kids.) The wealthy parents pay for this with K2, Kumon, Mathutopia... this should be standard for all of our children who are neuro-diverse.

4). Consider Direct Instruction at K-5 -- the only type of teaching style that has been proven scientifically to work over and over again with all types of learners. (see below)

<http://education-consumers.org/research-areas/policy-leadership/direct-instruction-resources/clear-teaching/>

5) SMALLER school districts. MCPS and it's 2.5 billion dollar budget is a complete and utter patronage system. Literally nearly every neighbor works some how with/in the schools -- so no one is going to critique their employer...and nothing changes. My neighbors voted largely for the 'Apple Ballot' thinking they are doing right by their kids -- when they are actively working AGAINST their kids... something has to give. We had three great candidates who were Special Education advocates lose in this election -- and one of the members returning is in her eighties! Waaaayyy too old to still be effective. Also, if something doesn't work -- not fast or flexible enough to change when things aren't going right. (MCPS is still on a curriculum that they know doesn't work after seven years.)

6) INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKING -- all schools in Maryland need to take the PISA or equivalent international test. Requirement for **any** state funds. We need to see how far behind we are. Germany completely revised their math curriculum after placing 14th in the world in 2015 (!) Don't let these education administrators play the critique-the-testing-data-game -- "Well, this test is not suited for our demographics...blah, blah, blah." There is no perfect test -- but we need to be in the international conversation. And if it's good enough for President Merkel to revise Germany's math -- then it's good enough for Maryland superintendents. Also, do not allow them to take ESL and SpecEd students out of the scoring. MCPS has an incredible marketing team -- that we need to curb with facts and 'PISA shock.'

7) Public School budgets need to be made public -- and districts that deploy traditional accounting standards should be rewarded (like New Jersey with more state funding). MCPS again is doing something with 2.5 billion dollars - and it's not effectively educating our kids. I only recently saw the county's budget made public. Six months ago it was just a pie chart on their website.

8) As a homeschooling parent -- force the schools to allow homeschooling children into their schools for specials. We pay taxes, why can't we pick the classes we want our kids to attend like in Pennsylvania? Again, tie it to State funding. Break the union monopolies...

9) Charter school options when tests scores fall below a certain percentage. Sorry, you had your chance -- now face competition. They tend to only work in socio-economically disadvantaged neighborhoods anyways -- so put them in there.

10) Stop spending money on tech that isn't supported with competent IT support staff or any bench research about its impact on neuro-plasticity of the brain. These are just expensive distractions in the classrooms that have no basis in cognitive research. Chrome books? Good for games! That's about it. If Steve Jobs kept every thing his company ever made from his kids then why, again, are we giving them to ours?

You are right to emphasize Massachusetts as the beacon. (Ninth in the world in the PISA exam in 2015?! Amazing) **But do we have the political will in Maryland to do what they did with their Educational Reform Act in 1993?** I fear we, unfortunately, will be more like Newark Public Schools after the Zuckerberg 100 million dollar gift in 2010 -- all the parties looked after their own self interests and the kids were left, yet again, last.

Kind regards,  
Tom Everly

**From:** Wendy Muher  
**To:** [Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education](#)  
**Cc:** [education@aclu-md.org](mailto:education@aclu-md.org)  
**Subject:** Kirwan Impact - Baltimore City and all Maryland Students Need A Proper Formula  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 28, 2018 11:09:37 AM

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From: **Wendy Muher**

Dear members of the Kirwan Commission,

Thank you for your time and dedication to this critical initiative. I hope all Maryland residents realize the importance of this outcome and the impact it will have on current students and the next generation of kids starting public school in Maryland.

I am the parent of 6th and 5th graders in Baltimore City public schools. Since they started pre-k, I have been attending funding meetings for city schools both in the city and in Annapolis. The life of an involved Maryland parent is more than just knowing how your own child is doing in math and language arts. I have learned more about how schools get funded than most parents ever have to learn. As a Baltimore City resident, it also means explaining over and over again that our physical schools are aging, that extreme poverty greatly impacts teaching, and that extreme poverty greatly impact social worker needs and after school support needs.

I have been fortunate enough that strong PTOs have helped bridge some (but not all) of the gaps for the students at my kids' schools, when funding has not been adequate. However, paying for a staff member is not something PTO funds should ever have to do. Many city schools do not have the luxury of a strong PTO. An adequate education for all students in Maryland is not a luxury. It's a right. And the prior formula is not providing that right at an adequate measure.

I am hopeful that the next generation of parents will not have to attend seemingly countless funding meetings, and instead will be able to focus on their student's well being, and maybe volunteering at the school with that found time from funding meetings. I have great faith from effort to collect input and come out and listen to our voices across Maryland (I sat in the auditorium at Poly High School for the full 3 1/2 hours), that the Kirwan Commission is putting forth a plan that will be equitable and effective for all Maryland students.

Wendy Muher

Mom to 6th grader at Mount Royal Elem-Middle #66 and 5th grader at Federal Hill Prep #45)

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# PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

## Transition Committee Office

Angela D. Alsobrooks  
County Executive Elect

November 29, 2018

The Honorable William E. (Brit) Kirwan, Ph.D.  
Chair, Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education  
Dept. of Legislative Services, Legislative Services Building  
90 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Kirwan and Commissioners:

As legislators, educators, administrators, parents, students, neighbors, we are all stakeholders in ensuring that Maryland's schools prepare our students to live productive and successful lives as adults. This outcome is common to elected officials all over the state and this collective goal has undoubtedly been at the forefront of this Commission's work.

We stand in agreement with the findings of the Commission that implementing the following, among other things, will improve our schools: attracting and retaining highly qualified and appropriately compensated educators; providing a system of early education that enables students to enter kindergarten early and ready; offering various college and career readiness pathways that provide our students with optimal post-secondary opportunities; and significantly reducing the existing achievement gaps between students across the state.

The working groups of this Commission have worked over many months to identify focus areas and goals that we can all agree, regardless of political affiliation, are necessary to build a world-class, top-performing education system.

As the Commission makes its recommendations, there are a few points that I would like to bring to your attention. Prince George's County currently has an operating budget of \$2.1 billion dollars. Fifty-six percent (56%) of that budget is derived from state funding that is calculated based upon student enrollment, special needs resource allocation, economically-disadvantaged students within the community, local wealth, local maintenance of efforts requirements and per pupil weighted formulas for at-risk student populations. When compared to other counties across the state, Prince George's County has a significant interest in the recalculation and/or distribution of any of these existing funding sources as any modification would have a substantial impact on the County. While we are cognizant of the fact that this is still an on-going process and have been advised that it would not be appropriate to add all of the estimates of the working groups together, it is quite obvious that the recommendations of this Commission will have a considerable fiscal impact at both the state and local level. In addition, while there has been some discussion of a 50/50% match, the level of local participation has yet to be clearly delineated. We have a concern that counties will have some serious difficulties with their ability to support that level of contribution in these uncertain economic times.

*"Fulfilling The Promise"*




# PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

## Transition Committee Office

Angela D. Alsobrooks  
County Executive Elect

Prince George's County supports the bolstering of the State and local school systems and has made this a top priority of the new administration. However, we respectfully request that the recommendations to the General Assembly include the proviso that the State work closely with the significantly impacted counties, like Prince George's, to develop funding formula(s).

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact me or my staff regarding any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,  
  
Angela Alsobrooks  
County Executive Elect