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PRESIDENT

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SECRETARY-TREASURER

To: Commission on Excellence and Innovation on Education
From: AFT-Maryland
Subject: Element 5 Recommendations

Commentary on the “Policy Area” Section for Element 5

AFT-Maryland strongly believes in the work of this commission, and that the consensus points we have reached thus far will indeed improve education for the children of this state. We are proud to partner in with other commissioners and stakeholders from diverse backgrounds to produce these recommendations. In this light, we understand the importance of assuring local school systems also undertake good faith efforts to implement these recommendations to the best of their ability.

With that said, we suggest a more helpful tone for this introductory section on accountability would be to acknowledge that numerous factors have contributed to disappointing results in student achievement. For example, the commission was presented with evidence from DLS (at the December 8, 2016 hearing) showing that after 2008, real student funding began to systematically fall behind the Thornton targets, resulting in a gap in 2015 of \$1.6 billion statewide between targeted and actual funding. APA, which underwent a very lengthy process to assess the adequacy of that original plan, found the gap between what resources students need and what they are actually getting to be even larger.

Any useful definition of accountability must, then, have a much broader focus than merely making sure local schools and systems meet what the commission sees to be their obligations. We should strive to build a system of cooperation and partnership between all stakeholders--accountable to each other-- to meet Maryland’s constitutional obligation to adequately fund its education system. Just as the public must have the confidence that increased investment will lead to actual, tangible improvements, so too must teachers, students, and parents have confidence that local and state leaders and other partners will live up to their end of the bargain.

Finally, in the interest of keeping expenditures low and assuring that resources aren’t wasted, the commission must be sure its recommendations do not result in programs that needlessly duplicate the accountability and intervention structures delineated by the state’s Every Student Succeeds Act plan that has already been submitted and approved by the federal government.

Element detail 5a) The Oversight Board

Element 5a. Membership and appointments

- Second sentence "...The members will include experts in preK-12 and postsecondary policy, including individuals with **AT LEAST THREE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE TEACHING IN A PUBLIC PREK-12 PUBLIC SCHOOL**, with knowledge"

Element 5a. Authority and Functions.

- Second sentence "Likewise it is not intended to replace day-to-day decision-making by local boards of education and superintendence, **NOR IS IT INTENDED TO HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO DIMINISH, SUPERCEDE, OR OTHERWISE INVALIDATE PROVISIONS OF A COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT REACHED BETWEEN A LOCAL BOARD AND THE EXCLUSIVE EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE ORGANIZATIONS.**"

Element detail 5b) Work of the Oversight Committee

Element 5b.5. In order for this detail to reach its desired effect, a more thorough timeline must be spelled out. Because districts (and in some cases, schools) plan and develop a budget many months before a school year, if the intent is to withhold funding in year 6 for a school or system not utilizing the strategies recommended by the Kirwan Commission, the commission must spell out precisely when in year 5 a school will be visited, when feedback will be given, and when a school or district will be able to respond. In order to have a useful dialogue on this issue, the commission needs to have a better understanding of how district and school budgets are developed and implemented.

Additionally, we strongly disagree with the implication that "new funding" here to be withheld count as the annual increase in funding given to a LEA. As noted in our commentary on the general policy area, Maryland has fallen far behind the targets spelled out by the original Bridge to Excellence formula by \$1.6 billion, and by standards of adequacy by almost \$3 billion annually. Under those plans, funding to a LEA could increase from year to year based on numerous factors (enrollment, inflation, numbers of students qualifying for disabilities, etc.). The Kirwan Commission should not recommend those funds-- stipulated by the Thornton Commission and APA's adequacy study-- be withheld if a school or district does not comply with Kirwan recommendations.

A more appropriate definition of "new" funding may be funding associated with the policy and funding recommendations stemming from this commission, above what districts had been promised under the Bridge to Excellence plan.

Element 5c) CTE Committee

If the process of reviewing CTE programs will parallel the process described in Element 5b, the commission should make clear who will be on this committee, even if it means revising the Workgroup 3 report. The committee should include individuals with at least three years experience teaching in a CTE program located within a public school.

- Suggested language: In the element introduction: "... upon graduation or in successful transfer to a community college CTE program **OR ACCREDITED, RECOGNIZED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM.**"

5c.2.

Sentence beginning "The Committee will organize and be responsible for Expert Review Teams of representatives of representatives of employers, **LABOR**, and CTE educators to visit those schools and employer sites to analyze the problems preventing adequate student progress toward successful completion of the CTE pathway and issue recommendations to the school board, the school community and the State for actions needed to correct those problems."

5c3.

"The CTE Committee will schedule the visits of the Expert Review Teams to inform the annual decisions made by the CTE Committee and MSDE on the release of school funds **OR THE CONTINUANCE OF AN EMPLOYER'S ELIGIBILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM, CONDITIONED ON IMPLEMENTATION OF KIRWAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS.**"
[STRIKE "CONDITIONED ON SCHOOL PERFORMANCE"]

Element detail 5d) Teacher Preparation Programs

Much of this section is tracking and assessing the various teacher preparation programs, and presumes these programs reside in higher education institutions in Maryland. By what measures will we ask alternative teacher preparation and placement programs to be held accountable? And by what measures will we ask that local school systems hire these newly trained, well-prepared teachers into their classrooms in numbers that reflect the diversity of the students they will teach?

5d)-- First paragraph

- "... That report will include data on trends in 1) teacher quality as measured by the grades, class standing and accountability test performance of students applying to and admitted to Maryland teacher education institutions;"

What is meant by "accountability test performance?"

- “3) the proportion of graduates of teacher education programs (including those graduates expecting to teach at the elementary school level) who have **TAKEN A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF COURSES-- AT LEAST 12 CREDIT HOURS--** in subjects they plan to teach,” [~~STRIKE “MAJORED.”~~]

Traditionally, higher ed students training to become teachers major in an education program.

- In order to assure that local districts are actively attempting to hire highly qualified, well trained teachers that reflect the diversity of their student populations, and assure that alternative teacher training and placement programs will be held to similar accountability standards as other traditional programs, AFT-Maryland proposes new language to the end of introductory paragraph for 5d.

STRIKE ORIGINAL CLAUSE “5) THE SATISFACTION OF SCHOOL DISTRICT OFFICIALS . . .”

REPLACE WITH “5) NUMBER OF MINORITY CANDIDATES HIRED, BROKEN DOWN BY HIGHER ED INSTITUTION/ALTERNATIVE TEACHING OR PLACEMENT PROGRAM, AND LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT IN WHICH THEY WERE HIRED, AND 6) THE SATISFACTION OF SCHOOL DISTRICT OFFICIALS WITH HIRES FROM THESE INSTITUTIONS AND PROGRAMS AFTER 5 YEARS AS DETERMINED BY THEIR RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ON A FORM THEY HELPED TO DEVELOP.”

- Additionally, AFT suggests a corresponding datapoint on top of the 10 suggested points MSDE and MHEC will report to the Oversight Board:

“11. TRENDS IN NUMBER OF MINORITY CANDIDATES HIRED BROKEN DOWN BY HIGHER ED INSTITUTION/ALTERNATIVE TEACHER PREPARATION AND PLACEMENT PROGRAM, AND DISTRICTS IN WHICH THOSE NEW TEACHERS HAVE BEEN HIRED.”

5e) Withholding funding.

Before we can have a meaningful discussion on this element in an attempt to come to consensus, the commission needs to say precisely what “new funding” is as opposed to “old” or existing funding. If “New Funding” here means any increase in funding over the prior fiscal year, AFT-Maryland opposes this element.

Since the commission is recommending accountability actions to be based on compliance with the commission’s recommendations, a more logical and fair understanding of “new funding” would be any dollars flowing directly from the policy recommendations of this commission. Funding that would be granted a district based on targets delineated by the Bridge to Excellence formula should not be recommended to be withheld from the Innovation and Excellence in Education commission.

5f) Money following the student.

Before we can come to any agreement on this element, the commission must have a working understanding on how districts (and in some cases, schools themselves) develop, plan, and implement budgets. Without a thorough sense of the real impacts on school and district budgeting, this recommendation could have serious, unintended consequences. Until the commission can get a better understanding of these implications to have an informed dialogue on this matter, AFT-Maryland opposes this element.