

# Education Advocacy Coalition

## for Students with Disabilities

December 17, 2018

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

Dear Chairman Kirwan and Commission members:

As you know, the Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities (EAC), a coalition of more than 25 organizations concerned with education policy for students with disabilities in Maryland, has followed with interest the work of the Commission. We are concerned that Commission staff are recommending, and Commission members will be considering at this week's meeting, reducing the funding weight for special education students. This change would result in a significant reduction in the overall amount of money allocated to special education. We understand that all special education funding decisions are interim because of the pending study, but we want to reiterate our previously-expressed concern that even the funding recommended earlier by the Commission would not have been sufficient to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

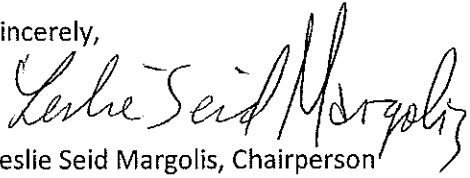
We understand the argument that if the base amount of money allocated per student is increased, less money is needed as an add-on for students with disabilities. We do not believe that this argument holds true for students with disabilities and others who face challenging circumstances that put them at risk of academic failure, disciplinary action, or other negative outcomes. Academic outcomes for students with disabilities are significantly poorer than they are for students without disabilities. Additionally, students with disabilities are disciplined at disproportionate rates, and other measures such as attendance and graduation rates show students with disabilities lag behind as well. Raising the base funding amount but then allocating less additional money will not alleviate these problems and will not enable students with disabilities to succeed.

We strongly recommend that the Commission reconsider its decision and reinstate the increased special education funding weight pending the outcome of the special education study. Additionally, we strongly recommend that the Commission take the opportunity to issue strong language about maintenance of effort—the requirement that local school districts be required to spend at least as much money on special education as they spent the previous year.

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Thank you for consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,



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