

**Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education**  
**William Brit Kirwan, Chairman**



**Witness Sign-up sheet**

**Date of Hearing: October 12, 2017**

**Location: Baltimore Polytechnic Institute**

**Opening Remarks**

- **Catherine E. Pugh, Mayor of the City of Baltimore**
- **Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises, CEO, Baltimore City Public Schools**
- **Cheryl A. Casciani, Chair, Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners**
- **Alison Perkins-Cohen, Chief of Staff, Baltimore City Public Schools**  
**Peter Kannam, Vice Chair, Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners**  
**Ashley Pena, Student Commissioner, Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners**

NAME	ADDRESS & PHONE NUMBER	NAME OF ORGANIZATION (IF APPLICABLE)	WRITTEN TESTIMONY	
			Yes	No
1. Ellie Mitchell		Director, Maryland Out of School Time Network		
2. Pat Childs		School Social Workers in Maryland		
3. Karen Webber		Open Society Institute – Baltimore		

NAME	ADDRESS & PHONE NUMBER	NAME OF ORGANIZATION (IF APPLICABLE)	WRITTEN TESTIMONY	
			Yes	No
4. <a href="#">Danista Hunte</a>		Speaking on behalf of Child First, an afterschool and community school provider in Baltimore City.	✓	
5. <a href="#">Steven R. Hicks</a>		Executive Director, Ready At Five	✓	
6. Kiragu Beattah		Special Ed Teacher, Frederick Douglas High School		
7. <a href="#">Carla McCoy</a>		Director, BTU Professional Development Center	✓	
8. Kimberly Mooney		Middle School Spanish Teacher/ Foreign Language Department Chair/ Gay-Straight Alliance Faculty Liaison/ Roland Park Elementary/Middle School #233		
9. Councilman Zeke Cohen		1st District, Baltimore City Council		
10. Delegate Nick Mosby		District 40, Baltimore City		
11. <a href="#">Senator Bill Ferguson</a>		District 46, Baltimore City	✓	
12. <a href="#">Ciera Smith</a>		Student. Speaking as part of City Neighbors High School	✓	
13. Katrina Kickbush		Wolfe Street Academy		

NAME	ADDRESS & PHONE NUMBER	NAME OF ORGANIZATION (IF APPLICABLE)	WRITTEN TESTIMONY	
			Yes	No
14. Najib Jammal		Principal, Lakeland Elementary Middle School in Baltimore		
15. Deborah Demery		PTA Council of Baltimore City		
16. Ratasha Gordon		A parent speaking on behalf of my son who is a student at Carter G. Woodson Elementary/Middle School in Cherry Hill		
17. Frank Malik Collins		PTA President from Woodhome Elementary Middle School		
18. Ben Dalbey		Parent of two kids at Hamilton Elementary/Middle 236	✓	
19. Rev. Eric Lee		Strong City Baltimore, Baltimore Education Coalition	✓	
20. Margaret Gibson		Parent and Decoding Dyslexia Maryland		
21. Elizabeth Hembling		Decoding Dyslexia	✓	
22. Keegan K. Taylor		Speaking on behalf of the Baltimore City Youth Commission	✓	
23. Frank Patinella		Co-Chairs of the Baltimore Education Coalition		
24. Sharicca Boldon				

NAME	ADDRESS & PHONE NUMBER	NAME OF ORGANIZATION (IF APPLICABLE)	WRITTEN TESTIMONY	
			Yes	No
25. Ryan Burbery		President-HCEA		
26. Kimberly Humphrey		Speaking on behalf of the ACLU of Maryland, Education Reform Project		
27. Bronwyn Mayden, MSW		Assistant Dean, Continuing Professional Education/ Executive Director, Promise Heights/University of Maryland School of Social Work	✓	
28. Thaen Hardy		Parent at Guildford Elementary Middle School		
29. Alexandria Warrick Adams		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Director, Elev8 Baltimore and community partner to the following schools in Baltimore City: Collington Square, Gilmor, Arundel, Cherry Hill, and William Pinderhughes</li> </ul>		
30. Margaret Holly		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent at William Pinderhughes</li> </ul>		
31. Elizabeth Mount		Executive director of The Downtown Baltimore Family Alliance		
32. Erika Seth Davies		Chief of Staff Baltimore Community Foundation		
33. Shiron Lindsay		Teacher, Poly		

NAME	ADDRESS & PHONE NUMBER	NAME OF ORGANIZATION (IF APPLICABLE)	WRITTEN TESTIMONY	
			Yes	No
34. Melissa Wells		Community Hub for Opportunities in Construction Employment		
35. Shatera McNair		Strong Schools Maryland	✓	
36. James Lindsay		Parent	✓	
37. Councilman Eric T. Costello		Baltimore City Council, 11th District	✓	
38. Kuana Burris		City Neighbors Charter School	✓	
39. Brittany R. Parham		Center for School Mental Health	✓	
40. Erasmo Barrera		Baltimore Teacher's Union	✓	
41. Sena Robinson		Music Teacher at Monarch Academy	✓	
42. Roxana Mejia		Painter's Union (to talk about apprenticeship programs)		
43. Stephanie Safran		Parent of a child attending a Baltimore City Public School		

NAME	ADDRESS & PHONE NUMBER	NAME OF ORGANIZATION (IF APPLICABLE)	WRITTEN TESTIMONY	
			Yes	No
44. <a href="#">Marietta English</a>		President, Baltimore Teachers Union	✓	
45. Kim Trueheart		Liberty Village Project		
46. Mary Alexander		Speaking on behalf of her grandchildren		
47. Jamar Day		Teacher speaking about Fine Arts and Cultural Programming in City schools		
48. Patrick McMahon		None.		
49. <a href="#">Kamala Carnes</a>		Principal with the Baltimore City Public School System	✓	
50. <a href="#">Tolu Sosanya</a>		Faith Leaders for Excellent Schools	✓	
51. <a href="#">John Wesby</a>		Patterson Park Public Charter School	✓	
52. <a href="#">Melissa Riccobono</a>		Patterson Park Public Charter School	✓	
53. Amelie Ward		Self/parent		

NAME	ADDRESS & PHONE NUMBER	NAME OF ORGANIZATION (IF APPLICABLE)	WRITTEN TESTIMONY	
			Yes	No
54. Randi Williams		Self (Policy Analyst for MDH and a Master's Candidate of Public Admin and Policy at American University)		
55. Jeffrey Ratnow		Speaking on behalf of his family		
56. Christie Getman		Parent of a 2 <sup>nd</sup> grader at Thomas Johnson Elementary/Middle school, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Downtown Baltimore Family Alliance (DBFA), which is a member of the BEC		
57. Jocelyn Providence		Teacher in the Baltimore City Public School System.		
58. Taylor Stewart		Director, Maryland Leadership for Educational Equity		
59. Sam Sharfstein		Student at Baltimore City College high school		
60. Corey Gaber		Teacher in Baltimore City Public Schools. Speaking on behalf of BMORE, the Baltimore Movement Of Rank and file Educators	✓	
61. Elizabeth Mount		Executive Director of the Downtown Baltimore Family Alliance		

NAME	ADDRESS & PHONE NUMBER	NAME OF ORGANIZATION (IF APPLICABLE)	WRITTEN TESTIMONY	
			Yes	No
62. Allison Pendell Jones	apendelljones@gmail.com	Serves on the Board of Directors of the Downtown Baltimore Family Alliance and is a parent of two children		



# BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Catherine E. Pugh**  
*Mayor, City of Baltimore*

**Cheryl A. Casciani**  
*Chair, Baltimore City Board of  
School Commissioners*

**Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises**  
*Chief Executive Officer*

## **Testimony of Alison Perkins-Cohen, Chief of Staff, Baltimore City Public Schools to the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education**

October 12, 2017

I would first like to thank Chairman Kirwan and the members of the Commission for the opportunity to provide feedback this evening on behalf of Baltimore City Public Schools. My name is Alison Perkins-Cohen and I serve as the Chief of Staff to City Schools CEO Dr. Sonja Santelises.

As was shared in tonight's opening remarks, the importance of this Commission's work cannot be overstated. Ultimately, your recommendations will have the power to determine the future of public education in Maryland for decades to come. As such, City Schools would like to highlight several of our priorities – many of which we believe strongly align with those of the Commission – as well as some of our concerns as they relate to the deliberations thus far of this body.

First and foremost, as you continue to grapple with the herculean task before you, City Schools strongly encourages the Commission to ensure that equity remain a fundamental goal of Maryland's education funding formula. Multiple independent studies have found that education funding in Maryland is inequitable, whereby districts with the greatest needs are on average less well funded than their wealthier counterparts. State resources ought to be provided to counties based on need, taking into account the resources that can or cannot be raised by local jurisdictions, with the State making up the difference in the poorest of jurisdictions.

In Baltimore City specifically, the current approach to measuring wealth includes certain economic incentives that have led the city to appear wealthier on paper than it actually is. While the district strongly supports the multiplicative approach to measuring wealth – which gives income wealth a greater weight than the current formula and is crucial to preserving the equity frame on which the Adequacy Report is based – regardless of which approach is ultimately adopted by the Commission, any measurement of local wealth must take economic incentives such as TIFs and PILOTs into account.

While wealth equalization and spending equity must serve as the Commission's overarching priority, the district is equally concerned by the failure of the Adequacy Report to address concentrations of poverty. City Schools is uniquely qualified to address this issue, because Baltimore City is home to more students living in poverty than any other district in Maryland. As such, our students have a greater level of need than other children in the state. 84 percent of the City's children were eligible for the FARMS program during the 2014-2015 school year, meaning their families' incomes were at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Line. Baltimore

also has more students who require special education services. To provide an adequate education that meets the needs of our students – academically, and also with necessary specialized services and support for social, emotional, and physical well-being – simply costs more.

Yet, according to the National Center on Education and the Economy, Maryland spends less on low-income school districts than on high-income school districts when state and local funding are combined. Only 15 states fared worse than Maryland in terms of how much extra support goes to students in high poverty districts, according to NCEE's 2017 analysis. In fact, Maryland is outperformed on this measure by some of the nation's poorest states including Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, and Tennessee. The lack of an escalator or weight to provide additional services to schools with high percentages of low-income students is alarming and deserves further attention by the Commission.

City Schools strongly favors the establishment of concentrated poverty funding that would modify the state's education funding formula by introducing higher per-pupil funding for low-income students in areas with the highest levels of poverty. As noted in the recent compensatory education report published by the Maryland Center on Economic Policy, there are several precedents for this approach. Thirteen states vary the level of funding school districts receive per low-income student according to their level of poverty, and several bodies of research suggest producing a unique low-income student weight for each school district rather than a single statewide weight. As you will undoubtedly hear later this evening from the teachers, principals, and community partners who are regularly on the front lines serving our students, the services that could be provided by such a weight (e.g. year-round school, longer school days, and extracurricular supports) are critical in ensuring the success of our students.

Given the economic challenges that face so many of our students' families, access to early childhood education has long been a priority of City Schools. We are encouraged by the attention that has been given to this important issue and hope that the Commission's final recommendations will include universal access to full-day pre-k for four-year-olds, as well as full-day programming for low-income three-year-olds. Looking ahead to implementation, City Schools notes that funding for early childhood ought to be captured in the student base and allow for inclusion of all appropriate weights. An additional add-on to account for the cost of smaller class sizes and para-educators is equally important.

Alternatively, the failure of the Adequacy Report to address capital needs is of grave concern to City Schools. Any view of adequacy that does not take into consideration the quality of school buildings and the subsequent impact on academic programming is unacceptable. Part of a high-quality educational experience includes attending school in a high-quality building that supports best practices in teaching and learning for the 21st century. With the oldest buildings in the state, including many that require constant repair due to the fact that their building systems and equipment are beyond their facility life cycles, City Schools' capital needs pose significant challenges that cannot be ignored when establishing a new education funding formula.

It should be noted that student transportation represents another issue that the Commission has not yet addressed. As an urban district, City Schools faces significant costs and challenges associated with specialized transportation, particularly as these relate to homeless and special needs student populations. Again, this is a tremendous cost-driver that needs to be taken into consideration as a new funding formula is developed.

As the state's largest provider of free and reduced price meals, City Schools is strongly opposed to the APA consultants' recommendation to use an unproven and burdensome application process as the basis for obtaining income data for state funding in districts electing the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). This type of action would put vital state funding for districts at risk at a time when the state ought to be encouraging CEP participation amongst districts and schools with concentrated poverty. City Schools instead encourages the Commission to establish an LEA-specific multiplier to more accurately calculate a proxy for economically disadvantaged students.

Similarly, the Commission should also explore policy solutions for accurately counting low-income immigrant students. As has been the experience in Baltimore City, because some methods for counting low-income students do not capture students who are immigrants or whose parents are immigrants – e.g. children who are undocumented may not be eligible for programs used in direct certification, and parents who are undocumented may be hesitant to apply even if their children are eligible – the Commission ought to identify steps to fully count low-income students in each school, regardless of their families' immigration status.

Specifically, policymakers should expand the types of direct certification allowed in Maryland. Under federal law, states may include as part of the direct certification count families who qualify for WIC, Medicaid and Federal Foster Care; however, Maryland currently does not allow these programs within its CEP count. While such a change will not fully solve the problem, expanding eligibility to these programs would certainly assist in allowing for a more accurate capture of students who are not counted currently.

As the Commission looks toward its final report and recommendations, City Schools respectfully requests that significant time be devoted to exploring the proposed weights to serve students with special needs, which the district believes are largely insufficient. While the proposed per pupil base cost is much higher than the current Maryland base, the estimated weights for students with special needs (limited English proficiency and compensatory education) are considerably lower, especially when coupled with the fact that the consultants advise against adjusting the funding formula in an exponential fashion as the concentration of poverty increases. Of particular concern is the weight for special education. While the commission is considering an increase, the special education weight still falls short of City Schools' current expenses in this area given the population we serve. We currently spend about \$300 million dollars annually to provide special education services to our students, yet we only receive approximately \$80 million for this expense under the current formula. This means that our general education funds have to subsidize our special education costs by about \$200 million per year.

Related to this concern is our concern regarding the Commission's potential recommendation for funding to follow students to the school level. While the district currently employs a Fair Student Funding model whereby funds are provided to schools based on student characteristics and need, the weights under any new model would have to be precisely aligned to the needs of each and every LEA in order for a state mandated Fair Student Funding model to be possible and remain in compliance with the law. As noted previously, under the current funding formula, City Schools regularly has to pull from general education funds to cover the cost of special education services that are required by law in order to meet students' needs, but for which we do not receive the necessary funding. Given this, the potential requirement that funding follow students to the school level is problematic and could prohibit Local Educational Authorities from being able to utilize available resources effectively to meet the needs of their students.

Finally, as the Commission grapples with the question of principal autonomy in low-performing schools, the district notes that any discussion in this area must encompass the need for a “like school” comparison, which Maryland has not yet developed. Specifically, any comparison of principals and/or schools ought to be made with consideration to the student population (e.g. schools with similar poverty rates, special education student populations, etc.). Without this, the ensuing result will be that principals in wealthier districts are granted autonomy, while those in poorer jurisdictions are not.

On behalf of City Schools, thank you for your commitment to Maryland’s public education system. We appreciate this opportunity to share our feedback and look forward to future collaboration.

# BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## BALTIMORE CITY BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS

**Testimony of  
Peter Kannam, Vice Chairman of the  
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners  
Before the  
Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education**

**October 12, 2017**

Good evening members of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education. I am Peter Kannam, the Vice Chairman of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners. I would first like to thank each and every one of you for taking an enormous amount of time and energy to analyze the current education system in Maryland and to make recommendations that will shape the future of the delivery of education for many years to come.

Baltimore City Public Schools has a student population with enormous potential. As a Board we have set high expectations for our students and are demanding more from our student and do not want to compromise on excellence. We expect all of our students to graduate college and career ready. We want to cultivate an atmosphere of excellence in the City because we know our students can accomplish at high levels.

Baltimore City Public Schools or City Schools as we call the school district, is a diverse district. We have large areas of concentrated poverty. We have some schools that are underutilized and we have schools that are over 200% in utilization. We have schools that are challenged and we have schools that are flourishing.

Nearly 15% of our population receive special education services, one of the highest in the state. And last year nearly 3% of our population is homeless, which equates to approximately 2,654 students. We have a growing English language learner population where approximately 6% of our students come from a home where English is not the primary language.

Under the community eligibility plan, the school district no longer collects free and reduced-price meal applications. The district relies on direct certification, which means low income is classified as the percentage of our students who receive Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance. Under direct certification the districts low income percentage is 65%. We use direct certification for income eligibility so that we can provide free breakfast and lunch to all students. Not collecting applications for free and reduced-price meals depresses our true low income percentage. When we were collecting applications, the school district was nearly 84% low income, which we believe is the more accurate number.



We know that one charge of the Commission is to review the Guaranteed Tax Base grant. This grant provides additional funding to school districts with less than 80% of statewide wealth per pupil and with a contribution of more than the minimum required local share under the foundation program in the prior fiscal year. City Schools receives this grant and it is being used by the City of Baltimore to help pay for the City of Baltimore's portion of the \$20 million it owes for the bond payments in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Buildings program. Clearly, this grant is important to the future of the program.

We also urge the Commission to look at what happens with enrollment declines and how to smooth out any major declines. Baltimore City lost over 2000 students in two years. This decline is caused by several factors such as a lower birth rates in Baltimore City, less school aged children in the City, and parents making other choices. This decline clearly wreaks havoc with a budget. While the amount of state money is decreasing, we still have the need to provide services and resources to students; and those costs are escalating. While we know we will be serving less children, the cost of doing business does not reduce as dramatically as the funding loss associated with declines in enrollment.

Again in 2017, thanks to the General Assembly leadership, legislation passed that allows for a smoother transition when enrollment is lost. A school board is eligible through FY 20, for an enrollment-based supplemental grant if the school system's most recent prior three year average full time equivalent (FTE) is greater than the FTE in the previous school year. We would like to have the Commission recommend this legislation be made permanent as it would be beneficial to counties losing enrollment. This legislation helped 10 of the 24 school districts in FY 2018. Those districts are: Allegany, Calvert, Carroll, Cecil, Garrett, Harford, Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot and Baltimore City.

As a school system we are demanding more of our students and do not want to compromise on excellence, therefore additional resources are needed. The state needs to play a greater role in the allocation of resources if the progress toward meeting state standards is not being made.

I end by saying that the Commission heard that if the original Thornton funding was realized and not capped in 2008, as of fiscal year 2015, City Schools would have received an additional \$290 million more than it is currently receiving had the Thornton formulas remained. This is a large disparity. In FY 2015 there was a \$1.6 billion adequacy gap in the State and it is only growing. We hope this Commission will recognize and work toward fulfilling the lost opportunities and programs that additional resources can support.

Again, I would like to thank the Commission and look forward to the recommendations.



Baltimore will grow and prosper if we develop each child first.

**October 12, 2017**

**Testimony to the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education**

**Submitted by Danista E. Hunte**

Good Afternoon Dr. Kirwan and Commissioners. Thank you for this opportunity to speak before you and to share my thoughts regarding the new education funding formula for the State of Maryland.

My name is Danista Hunte, and I am

- A parent of a 4<sup>th</sup> grader enrolled in a public charter school in Baltimore City,
- The aunt of two high school students enrolled in Anne Arundel County public schools
- The godmother of a 2<sup>nd</sup> grader and a kindergarten student enrolled in Harford County public schools.

- I am the Executive Director of Child First Authority, a local non-profit that provides afterschool programming in 11 schools and manages 8 community schools here in Baltimore City
- Prior to my role at Child First, I was a funder for 16 years and provided grants to educational programs, youth development programs, and to the Baltimore City School system.

As you can see my commitment to public education is both personal and professional.

I would like to draw your attention to three areas which the commission should focus its recommendations for the new funding formula.

**First, Community Schools and After School** programming are proven strategies to support low-income students and families. Community schools are neighborhood hubs for coordinated, wrap-around, supportive services that meet parents' and children's individual needs. Community School staff coordinate mental health services, homelessness services, parenting classes, adult education, academic interventions for students, and attendance and absenteeism strategies. Last school year, Child First community school coordinators leveraged over \$1.6M in financial and in-kind resources and services for their schools.



Access to high quality after school programming leads to improved academic outcomes, improvements in children's behavior, and increased attachment to school. Although Child First cannot take full credit for students' academic achievement, our after school instruction and programming are key components to academic success. For example, four Child First schools ranked in the top 15 schools that demonstrated student growth on the PARCC test from 2015 to 2016. In addition, two of our schools ranked in the top 10 for overall pass rate on the PARCC test.

We are operating in a space and time where funding to support such programs are at-risk at the federal level and locally. Parents, community members, and countless advocacy and organizing groups rallied last school year to secure funding from the state to avert a budget deficit for City Schools and petitioned the city government to provide funding for out of school time programming and community schools. The cyclical nature of having to organize to sustain level funding to provide rich opportunities for our children means that funding is always at risk, and our students deserve more. Funding to support community schools and after school programming should be a part of the funding formula.

## **Second, Pre-Kindergarten Education**

Maryland's KRA data reveal that students who have had a formal public or private all-day Pre-K experience arrive at the doors of kindergarten more ready to engage in learning as compared to students who did not have a Pre-K experience. Each LEA makes a decision as to whether it can afford to fund full-day Pre-K, and not many districts make that decision. Baltimore City Public Schools does make the financial commitment to pay for full-day Pre-K, but it comes at an expense. The new funding formula must include a per pupil allocation for full-day Pre-Kindergarten for low-income 3 year olds, that are not covered by Early Head Start, and 4 year olds. This may sound costly, but using a mixed delivery system that includes public and private providers working in partnership with the school system has already proven successful and cost-effective here in Baltimore City.

### **Third, equitable distribution of state funding**

Baltimore City has large numbers of students that live in concentrated poverty and at the same time our city is experiencing economic growth and development which makes our city look richer than it actually is. Even with this recent growth in wealth, the City is still unable to meet the needs of its citizens and students. The use of tax increment financing or other economic development

incentives should not be allowed to reduce the state's role (and constitutional duty I might add) to ensure that schools are funded. Education funding should be distributed according to a county or City's ability to contribute to its local school system, and it should be based on a fair and accurate measurement of wealth.

The recommendations that this commission will put forth at the end of this year and the subsequent funding formula that our legislators will enact will impact public education for at least the next 2 decades.

Ladies and Gentlemen, WE HAVE TO GET IT RIGHT AND THE URGENCY IS RIGHT NOW.

I thank you for your time.

Remarks to the Commission on Innovation & Excellence in Education

October 12, 2017

Steven Hicks, Executive Director of Ready At Five

[steven@readyatfive.org](mailto:steven@readyatfive.org)

[www.readyatfive.org](http://www.readyatfive.org)

Chairman Kirwan and members of the Commission, thank you for your dedicated service to the children and youth of Maryland and for the opportunity to provide comments for your consideration.

My name is Steven Hicks. I am the Executive Director of Ready At Five. Ready At Five improves the practice and quality of early childhood education in Maryland so that every child – no matter the zip code in which she lives, her language ability, disability or socio-economic status – has the foundational skills needed for success in school, career and life. I am also here as a former kindergarten teacher who knows the difference high-quality early learning experiences make in the life trajectories of children.

Neuroscience tells us that in the first years of life, more than 1 million neural connections form in the brain every second, building the brain's architecture and providing the foundation for all future learning, behavior, and health. Barriers detrimental to that brain's educational achievement can start early, including those caused by poverty, caregiver mental illness, child maltreatment, and low maternal education. By the time that child reaches kindergarten, he may already be far behind his peers.

One proven, successful intervention is high-quality prekindergarten for 4-year-olds. When we provide *all* children with equitable opportunities to attend high-quality prek, we ameliorate some of the risks to their learning and development. Even economists illustrate that the early years matter, finding that there is a huge return on public investment when children from low-income families attend high-quality early childhood programs.

Last year, less than half of Maryland's 4-year-olds who entered kindergarten, had attended publicly-funded prekindergarten, and just over one-third of those attended full-day programs. Stop and think about that for a minute. That means that just 16% of all Maryland's 4-year-olds in kindergarten – the majority of whom are from low-income families – were given the opportunity to attend full-day programs, giving them the strong start they need. With such a massive inequity in prekindergarten access, is anyone surprised to see a 19-point achievement gap along income lines? Only one-third of children from low-income families entered school with the foundational knowledge, skills, and behaviors needed to fully participate in the kindergarten curriculum. For English Learners and children with disabilities, only about 1 in 4 demonstrated readiness. This is not how you build a world class education system. It must be built from the ground up by investing in early learning.

Right now, we have an historic opportunity to disrupt the status quo of inequities that exist in our state by increasing access to quality early learning. Last month, the PreK Workgroup created by House Bill 516, sent its Findings and Recommendations to this Commission to provide voluntary, universal high-quality, full-day prekindergarten for all 4-year-olds in a mixed delivery system made up of schools and community-based programs, and phased in over at least 10 years.

Ready At Five strongly encourages the Commission to use this report to make recommendations for legislative and policy initiatives as part of our urgent call to support our students. We must remedy the longstanding

deficiencies in funding provided to local school systems by including pre-k students in local school system enrollment counts for state and local funding formulas as was outlined in the *Final Report of the Adequacy of Funding for Education in Maryland*.

We must have a comprehensive approach to equity in education. Equity doesn't mean that all jurisdictions get the same resources; State investments must be adjusted to ensure that the less wealthy jurisdictions receive sufficient state education funds to meet the needs of all its children and youth. It also means that some students get additional supports - such as children from low-income families, children with disabilities, and English learners.

Brains are built over the life of an individual, starting in the early years. All children, no matter the jurisdiction in which they live, need and deserve equitable access to high-quality early childhood education, beginning from birth. Today, there is huge momentum across the country. A 2017 poll by the First Five Years Fund shows that 74% of voters say that quality early childhood education sets children up for academic success in elementary school. We must speak up for the children of Maryland so they can *all* succeed.

Thank you.

# The Baltimore Teachers Union

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AFT 340 AFL-CIO  
Seton Business Park  
5800 Metro Drive, 2<sup>nd</sup> Fl.  
Baltimore, MD 21215-3209

Testimony of Carla McCoy  
BTU Director of Professional Development  
Before the Commission on Excellence and Innovation in Education  
October 12, 2017

Becoming a teacher was the career choice I made for myself as a preteen. I worked toward my goal by tutoring and assisting any teacher who would have me. Being hired by Baltimore City Public Schools was an achievement fulfilled. I had graduated college, moved to a new city and began my career in a matter of months. I was assigned to Harlem Park Junior High School. There, I was embraced by the teachers on the faculty, some of whom became like family, supported by the English department head and the English Specialist from the district. There was no lack of support and I contribute that to my tenure and success as a teacher.

As the years progressed, the support positions changed and/ or disappeared. A new teacher did not experience the same level of support as I had years before in programs, such as Blum Mentor and the Master Teacher Model. Mentoring programs came and went, but not all teachers were included or supported by them – typically through no fault of their own.

Fortunately, I have always been a part of a school where there was an atmosphere of collaboration, comradery and support. That is unfortunately not the case for many teachers. According to COMAR, the Comprehensive Teacher Induction Program requires ongoing support from a mentor, including regularly scheduled meetings during non-instructional time. As it stands right now, I am unsure that there are enough early career mentors and supports available to fulfill this obligation.

When the opportunity arose for me to become trained as a mentor I welcomed it. By this time I was teaching at Edmondson Westside High school where I remained for 24 years. I needed to give back what was deposited in me. At this point, a new teacher was considered an early career teacher, one who had 1-3 years' experience. Our once stable faculty had begun to retire, and we found ourselves with many early career teachers. At one time, there were 15-17 early career teachers and I was assigned their mentor. I still had a full load of classes, so we met after school. The second semester, one of my classes was taken away and I could then visit the teachers in their classrooms. This was clearly not an ideal situation to assist someone when 4 ½ months had passed before I could see how they were progressing with instruction and classroom management. The teachers welcomed and needed assistance, but the one on one contact that I had receive was barely in existence any more. I taught in the classroom for 30 years and for the most part loved every moment of it. Teachers employed by city schools today, are not making a career of teaching. I believe that lack of support is a primary reason for that. The sustainability of a solid faculty is the backbone of a successful school- everyone wins.

Therefore, I strongly encourage members of this Commission to consider funding recommendations that will incorporate thorough supports and development for early career educators to avoid lack of success in the profession and prevent flight risks. I believe that our students deserve the best education possible and having a knowledgeable & well-equipped educator is key.

Good evening,

My name is Kimberly Mooney and I'm a Spanish teacher at Roland Park Elementary/Middle School here in Baltimore City. I have been teaching for 13 years but I remember learning, in graduate school, about Abraham Maslow and his psychological theory, the hierarchy of needs (<https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>). Educators and psychologists have accepted this theory, which tells us that unless our physiological needs (such as food and shelter), safety needs, and social needs are met, human beings cannot meet their full potential and be truly self-actualized.

That being the case, the Kirwan Commission must seriously consider how to make sure that students' unmet physiological, safety, and social needs are addressed so that learning can happen.

The National Center on Education and the Economy recently published a document called "9 Building Blocks for a World-Class Education System". This evening, I want to direct your attention just to Building Block #2, which is to "Provide more resources for at-risk students than for others"

What does that mean for us in MD?

+Every school system in MD is impacted by concentrated poverty, meaning that 40% or more of the people in each district live below the poverty line. In Somerset, Kent & Caroline counties 100% of public schools must contend with concentrated poverty. In Allegheny & Dorchester counties and here in Baltimore City, over 90% of school sites have concentrated poverty.

**Currently it's hard to determine exactly how many low-income and undocumented students are in which schools, especially since the forms that were used to qualify students for free and reduced meals were eliminated. Therefore, you must take extra care to develop a formula that captures, as accurately as possible, the funding each school needs for its:**

**-low-income households**

**-areas of concentrated poverty**

**-English-language learning populations (who may not get "counted" by some measures if they are undocumented)**

**-students with special needs**

**because it simply takes more money to educate those students to the level that we expect in our State and in this nation than it would without those challenges.**

In addition to the effects of these factors you must also consider that trauma prevents students from being successful in school unless students get the right care.

**An estimated 20,000 children in Baltimore City have a parent who is incarcerated or "supervised".**

(<http://health.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/Children%20of%20Incarcerated%20Parents%20Updated.pdf>)

**+It would greatly help address this if we were able to expand the community schools program, and make sure that every school has enough social workers, psychologists, guidance counselors, and other clinicians that can address the social/emotional needs of children so that they can attend to the work of learning.**

Despite that I happen to currently work in a school in one of the wealthiest pockets of our city, we still have students who are hungry, students who suffer the loss of classmates, relatives, and friends to gun violence, students who suffer domestic and sexual abuse, and any number of other hardships.

Please make sure our schools get the funding they need to give all MD kids an excellent education. Thank you.





THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
 LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 46  
 BALTIMORE CITY

October 12, 2017

I address this distinguished Commission this evening as the representative of Maryland's 46<sup>th</sup> District in the Maryland State Senate, but also on behalf of my delegation members in the 46<sup>th</sup> District – Delegates Luke Clippinger, Brooke Lierman, and Robbyn Lewis. Chairperson Kirwan and Commissioners, thank you for allowing me to testify, and thank you for providing Team 46 the opportunity to pass along the thoughts of those who represent 122,000 Marylanders who call Baltimore City home.

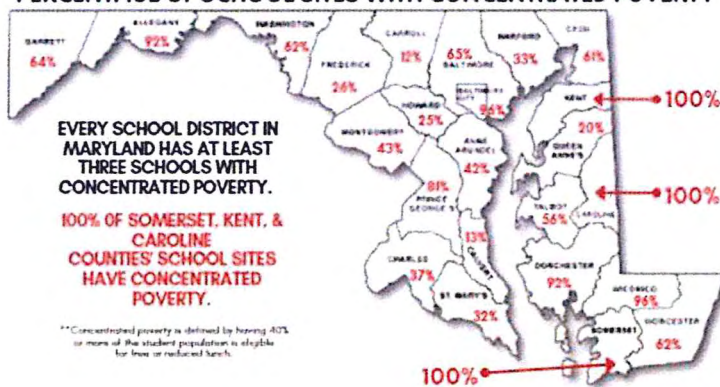
The task before this Commission presents a once in a generation opportunity to set a bold vision for a world-class education for all Maryland's children. That is an awesome and grave responsibility with lasting consequences. We have not made substantial changes to the current funding formula since its enactment in 2002, and we likely will not take on such a substantial review for at least another 15 years. Therefore, your work product will almost certainly impact the educational trajectory for every one of our State's current kindergartners through his or her graduation from a Maryland high school.

I ask you to imagine those kindergartners today, having learned just a few hours ago about shapes, colors, counting, and basic reading. Where is he or she in 15 years? Is he or she graduating with the skills and knowledge to succeed in a career? Is he or she leaving school without the need for remediation in post-secondary studies? Is he or she prepared to be an active and engaged citizen? Or is he or she facing a roll of the dice, dependent on an inequitable distribution of resources based on geography that become a barrier to living an economically independent life?

As a former Baltimore City teacher and parent of a Baltimore City Public Schools kindergartner, I deeply understand that the work you are doing is heavy, urgent, and immensely important. I have followed the Commission from the beginning and have seen the time and seriousness that each of you has brought into this work. I am immensely confident that each one of you will do what is right.

The Commission's focus on the National Center for Education & the Economy's Nine Building Blocks of a World-Class Education System serves a solid foundation for setting Maryland on a path towards educational excellence and equity. Within this framework, I trust that you will wisely use the testimony from experts, practitioners, advocates, and researchers that have come before this Commission to establish a clear vision that the General Assembly can debate and enact as quickly as possible. I know that you recognize the importance of this body's work, and I have great faith in your commitment to this moment.

**PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOL SITES WITH CONCENTRATED POVERTY**



Education in Maryland has glimmers of excellence in our statewide system – wonderful schools that produce secondary and workforce ready students. However, access and success to those opportunities are not equitably distributed. Unfortunately, far too many of the over 880,000 students in Maryland are not afforded the same pathways to success.

Nationally, concentrated poverty is defined by having 40% or more of the school population qualifying for free or reduced priced meals. Today in Maryland, every single school district in our State has at least three schools with concentrated poverty, and in 14 of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions, a majority of the schools in the county have concentrated poverty. Three counties – Kent, Somerset, and Caroline – have 100% of their schools with concentrated poverty. Given the changing demographics of Maryland and the widening income equality gaps we see growing all too quickly, this issue is not just a Baltimore City issue, it is a Maryland issue.



Furthermore, Maryland is the only State in the nation where average scores in math and reading at grades 4 and 8 dropped between 2013 and 2015 on the NAEP exams. This brought Maryland's overall ranking to 23<sup>rd</sup> in the country – far below many peoples' perceptions of a state with the greatest wealth in the nation. What is more disheartening, Maryland's rank fell from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 37<sup>th</sup> among states when student subgroups were compared and averaged. The implication of this dramatic statistic: despite the good in our system, we are not sufficiently serving our highest need populations, most acutely with regard to English-language learners, special needs students, and lower-income students.

Yet, the work before this Commission is not just an education matter, it is also about the future of Maryland's economy. We live in a time of deep economic uncertainty and anxiety. By 2020, two out of three jobs created in Maryland will require more than a high school diploma and at least some post-secondary credential as a minimum qualification. Whether

students immediately join the workforce or attend postsecondary education – or both, it is our responsibility that they are prepared to succeed. Today, in our highest income communities and our lowest, we are not meeting this standard. Moving forward, our funding formula and the policies it represents must offer a new vision based in core beliefs about the potential that all children possess and the coherent governance systems that ensure their success is achieved.

Fundamentally, our students must be able to graduate ready to pursue a postsecondary education, if they choose, without remediation. They all must graduate with the knowledge & skills to succeed in a career in which they can find satisfaction & earn a living wage. And all students must graduate having the knowledge & skills to be an effective citizen to safeguard that we are able to compete in an ever-changing, global economy in the decades ahead.



An organization has emerged, Strong Schools Maryland, that supports the work you are doing to encompass the 9 Building Blocks for a World Class Education into Maryland's education formula. Strong Schools Maryland believes that, with public will and political resolve, the knowledge and skills exist to provide our students with every opportunity to succeed in life. Their grassroots organizing effort across the State is meant to support the Commission and keep its focus on the needed outcomes for Maryland.

The beauty of this Commission is that it has the opportunity to ignore the politics of a legislative process and set forth a report that is right for Maryland's children, families, and economic future. I urge you not to dwell on what you believe will be politically feasible. The time for politics will surely arrive, but now is not that time. Permit the elected leadership of our state to own that burden. Instead, I urge you to produce a report to the Governor and General Assembly that:

- Creates real partnerships with Maryland's employers so that we establish clear career pathways for all students;
- Makes bold investments in high quality early childhood education opportunities for all families so that all children and their families enter the schools ready to succeed;
- Includes genuine accountability and transparent goals that educators, parents, and the community can fully appreciate and understand;
- Incentivizes targeted investments in educator career ladders throughout the State so that the best and brightest professionals lead all of our children's classrooms every day; and,
- Revises our wealth equalizing funding formula to realistically and predictably target more resources to the students and schools that need them most.

I conclude this evening by bringing your attention back to those five year olds across Maryland's classrooms. The world ahead of them is limitless. With the right opportunities, their potential knows no bounds. They will embark on careers in jobs that we cannot even imagine today, in a world that will look remarkably different and more advanced than ours does right now. In a state like Maryland, with its rich geography, enormous economic prowess, deep intellectual capital, and innovative business community, there is every reason to believe that each of those 5 year-old children in our State's classrooms will live a productive, economically independent, and engaged life for decades to come.

Commissioners, you have the opportunity set Maryland on a path towards making that a vision a reality – not just for those kindergarteners, but for all of Maryland's students and families to come.

You were each selected because of your unique talents, valuable contributions, and dedication to Maryland. Do not lose sight of why you are sitting on this Commission. We ask that you keep working tirelessly to set out a bold vision for education in Maryland that inspires us all. We in District 46, know you will do the very best you can, as the future of our State's families, its workforce, and its economic future is in your hands.

Sincerely,



Bill Ferguson  
Senator, District 46



Luke Clippinger  
Delegate, District 46



Brooke Lierman  
Delegate, District 46



Robbyn Lewis  
Delegate, District 46





**Remarks by Ciera Smith**  
City Neighbors High School student  
At the Kirwin Commission Public Hearing  
October 12, 2017  
at Baltimore Polytechnic Institute, Baltimore, MD

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Ciera Smith and I am a high school senior at City Neighbors High School.

I am here to tell you what I know, but I want to start by saying that I am a product of the Baltimore City public school system. My family always instilled in me the value of education. They always say that education is the key to success and opportunity. As I finish my senior year of high school, I approach it with much trepidation.

I know that other schools whether they are private or in wealthier zip codes, provide their students with access to accelerated coursework. This advantage provides students with ample opportunity to go to college. For them, college is an expectation which to us, sometimes feels like a dream. My friends and I fight to have access to these tools which would enable us to reach our full potential. Economic status should not determine whether or not we get to succeed.

The physical conditions of our schools are linked to the level of our academic performance. I can tell you from experience, it's not easy to focus in environments that are uncomfortable. Too often we find ourselves without heat or air conditioning.

I know that I want to go to college and to do that, I need strong SAT scores. But how am I supposed to compete with students who have had months of preparation? My school and many others in the city can only afford one week of prep, leaving us vulnerable and unprepared. We are left with scores that are unsatisfactory

and often below what colleges accept. This is unjust and perpetuates the stereotype that Baltimore public school students aren't bright enough.

Lastly, and the biggest reason why I am here, is because what I know -- and what all my classmates know too - is that when schools are underfunded, we are not able to work at our maximum ability. We are trapped in a cycle of oppression and poverty which we hoped the access to education would break.

I am urging the Kirwin Commission to recommend fully funding education in Maryland, and to make sure that funding is equitable. Here in Baltimore, we have intelligent and creative students with a lot of needs and parents who work hard but can't always meet those needs. It is important the Kirwin Commission recognize that we need help getting resources like extra SAT prep, STEAM courses, vocational technical courses, counseling services, interventions for struggling learners, and services for students and families.

This issue is greater than a three minute speech. It affects me and everyone who comes after me and those who came before me. We are talking about their lives and their futures. It is imperative that we fund schools in order to change the nature of our city. Fully funded education leads to a safer and sounder Baltimore.

Thank you.



October 12, 2017

## COMMISSION ON INNOVATION AND EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

William E. Kirwan, Chair

My name is Ben Dalbey, I am a parent of two children who attend Hamilton Elementary/Middle School in northeast Baltimore. The task of this commission is to address multi-generational inequities in funding for Baltimore City Public Schools. I am here to thank you for your public service and to hold each of you accountable to the obligation of that service, which is to do everything in your power to direct millions of additional dollars into Baltimore's school system.

We are going to be done with the years of looking at Hamilton's proposed budget for the next school year and deciding which teacher we are going to have to get rid of, which resource we can no longer afford, which extracurricular we will need to cut. We will have no more school years like last year, which was derailed by the psychological trauma of the massive budget crisis caused by a lack of funding from the state. Our school community of over 800 students cannot survive annual discussions of losing a homeroom teacher from each grade level.

Your job is to make sure our annual budget review process will in the future be characterized by discussions of which grade level will get an extra teacher, which classes can be split to provide smaller learning environments, what resources can we add and what additional funds we can provide to our kids and teachers who already do so much with so little.

The proposed funding formula for charter schools presented at previous hearings by the Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools and KIPP Baltimore of a 2% administrative fee plus facilities funding would flip your obligation to bring equity to school funding in Baltimore on its head. Instead of bringing much needed financial stability to our schools, their proposed formula would further enrich charter schools at the expense of traditional schools in the city. Ultimately, and as our local school board knows, the charter advocate's formula would bankrupt our school district.

A 2% so-called "administrative fee" does not begin to cover the system-wide costs of running a school district, which every public school in Baltimore City should share. These are not administrative fees, but huge costs for things like system-wide debt service payments and non-public placements of students with disabilities. These important costs, along with significant expenses necessary to support an already decimated central office, should be shared by all public schools. If charter schools do not want to pay them, they should become private schools. If they would like to be public schools, they should pay their fair share of public school system expenses.

Regarding facilities funding, over the course of the last several years, my kids have sometimes eaten lunch in their classrooms because their cafeteria floor was full of water. They've sometimes eaten in the cafeteria with their winter coats on because there was no heat. They have water fountains from which no one can drink, wifi that does not work even for testing or back to school night, and a host of other serious facilities problems our kids and teachers deal with every day.

You are familiar with the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools initiative and the construction of new and renovated school buildings in the city. The school my kids attend is at the end of that initiative – year nine I believe, and gets more or less nothing out of it. I'm expecting very little, and I'm okay with that,

because I know enough to know that with all of the problems we have at our individual school, there are many Baltimore city school buildings with needs significantly greater than ours.

What I am not okay with is charter management organizations and new charter operators trying to jump to the front of the long existing line for facilities funding and demanding even more money for themselves. The misappropriation of the term “equity” they attach to this claim adds insult to injury. MACPS is asking you to do the opposite of what the vast majority of public school families in Baltimore need from you right now.

Please reject the charters’ narrow-minded “2% plus facilities” recommendation and stay focused on the task at hand, which is to give public schools in Baltimore the funding they are owed, the funding they need, and the funding they deserve.

Thank you.

**The Kirwan Commission  
Baltimore Polytechnic High School**

**October 12, 2017**

To the Honorable Dr. William Kirwan, Chair; and the honorable and respective members of the board of the Kirwan Commission.

My name is Rev. Eric Lee and I am Director of Neighborhood Programs at Strong City Baltimore, in which we manage two community schools; I am a member of the Baltimore Education Coalition; a minister at St. Matthew's New Life United Methodist Church in Baltimore; **but most importantly, a resident in Baltimore City with a grandson that will be starting school in Baltimore City Schools next year.**

Thank you for the opportunity to address the commission regarding **the establishment of a new funding formula that will ensure adequate funding for Baltimore City Schools**, which have been under-funded and under-resourced since 2008, the result of the State's cutting of the "inflation factor" from the previous funding formula. **That's 10 years of under-funding and lack of resources for Baltimore's most vulnerable population, the children and youth of Baltimore City Schools.**

We are here today to appeal to your sense of moral and ethical obligation...the obligation of finally providing an equitable quality of education to those who have historically been denied the needed resources...**which was the promise of the 1954 Supreme Court decision of Brown vs. Board of Education. And here we are today, 63 years later, hoping for adequate funding to bring Baltimore City Schools into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, let alone the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.**

Throughout the history of education in our country, as you well know, our students of color and schools in poorer neighborhoods continue to be plagued with lower test scores and graduation rates, low teacher retention, limited or no Advanced Placement classes and a lack of rigor in core curriculum. This is partially the result of an inequitable distribution of resources, leading to an unequal quality of education.

**EQUITY does not mean equal. EQUITY means fairness. And fairness is to provide adequate funding and resources to those most in need**, and not merely an equal amount distributed across an entire state. And to be fair, we know that there must be, and should be accountability that goes along with adequate funding.

So here is the moral walk; the journey towards justice: That the same quality and equitable education that a child in a wealthier, more resourced community would receive, **is guaranteed** for every child in Baltimore City Public Schools. **We must believe that the civil rights issue of our day, and therefore the racial and economic justice issue of our day, is to provide educational justice for every student.**

Thank you for your time.

Rev. Eric P. Lee  
Director of Neighborhoods  
Strong City Baltimore  
Baltimore Education Coalition



Testimony October 12, 2017

Baltimore Polytechnic Institute

Elizabeth Hembling

Central Chapter Leader Decoding Dyslexia Maryland

Dear Members of the Kirwan Commission,

My name is Liz Hembling and I am a chapter leader for Decoding Dyslexia Maryland. I would like to discuss reading failure in the state of Maryland, and how methods that work for dyslexic students, who are the most difficult cohort to teach, can help those in general education who struggle with reading.

We have a literacy crisis. Here in Baltimore City. According to NAEP 86% of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders read below proficient, 55% of Baltimore City kids are reading at a “below basic” level. Below basic is functionally illiterate. An adult reading at this level could barely read “take with food” on a medicine bottle. The latest PARCC scores for 2016 were just released, and only 40.6% of kids in grades 3 through 8 in our state were able to pass the English portion of PARCC. These same scores are mirrored by our other benchmarks like NAEP. We have a massive reading gap.

We need the Kirwin Commission to focus on obtaining funds to improve literacy.

Several years ago there were four bills that passed in the state of Maryland that put together a taskforce to create a dyslexia pilot program similar to those in other states like Pennsylvania and Ohio. The pilot for Maryland has been developed and is one of the most innovative

solutions to improve literacy in the US. We need it to be funded and implemented. Ultimately it is our goal to see it expanded from a pilot, to the way reading is addressed in all schools in our state. The pilot would require that students would be screened for reading failure, and that students would learn to read via structured literacy, which is an approach that is both systematic and sequential. Research shows that 95% of ALL kids can learn to read using this method including English as a second language learners and those with language based learning disabilities like dyslexia. This could have a massive impact on our literacy numbers.

To teach all kids to read via structured literacy requires teachers be trained in it. One area of need to is to get teachers this training. Many teachers were trained in college using a whole language technique that has left many students behind. We need the time and resources for retraining. The Commission should not only allocate funds for this purpose, but they should also look to the Every Student Succeeds Act as well as the federal READ Act to see if they could access additional money.

Once teachers learn new skills, they need to continue their learning. Teachers should have ample time to have professional development that is in depth and meaningful. New teachers should also have mentors and coaches to make sure they are implementing new skills properly. This is critical for them to grow as professionals.

Not all kids that struggle to read are dyslexic, but methods that work for the hardest to teach to read, those with dyslexia, may hold the answer to the literacy crisis in our state. Please focus on closing the reading gap. The 60% of Maryland students who are behind in reading are counting on you.

Below is a link to an article and podcast completed by APM Reports, a division of National Public Radio. This piece features families from here in Maryland with children in the public school system who were identified with reading failure/dyslexia. It shows how difficult the struggle was for the children and the families to get appropriate help, and conversely shows a school district in Ohio which has implemented something similar to the Dyslexia Pilot Program. Please feel free to reach out to Decoding Dyslexia Maryland if you would like more in depth information on the Pilot, as well as other solutions to close the reading gap in Maryland.

<https://www.apmreports.org/story/2017/09/11/hard-to-read>

Good evening. My name is Keegan Taylor and I am the chair and District 1 Representative of the Baltimore City Youth Commission, and I live in legislative district 46. I am here tonight speaking on behalf of the Commission.

Dr. Alvin Thornton said a child's education should not be a function of their family's income, or the value of the property in which they live. Dr. Thornton has since said that he believes some displacement has taken place. One of the principals of Thornton was that local districts would not take Thornton money and use it to displace local contributions. The Kirwan Commission must strengthen that principal.

The Final Report of the Study of Adequacy of Funding for Education in Maryland found that public schools in Maryland have been underfunded by \$2.9B. Yes, \$2.9B. Our children have been shorted \$2.9B. For us in Baltimore City, in 2015, the shortage was \$358 million. As you know, Baltimore City Public Schools had significant layoffs this year, which would have been unnecessary if our schools had been adequately funded.

What impact has years of underfunding had on the children of Baltimore City Public Schools? I would like to take a moment to share some experiences of Baltimore City Public Schools students.

Picture a second grader, coming to tutoring upset many days. She said, "I tried to pay attention today and really wanted to learn but my teacher had to keep yelling at my class because they were misbehaving." Teachers are often overwhelmed, not only by class size, but by the lack of resources for their students. Students, particularly students who experience trauma act out in any number of ways, particularly when they are young. This story speaks to the needs of the students who were misbehaving, to the needs of the students who were distracted by their classmates, and to the needs of the teacher who needed help. It also speaks to the vital importance of tutoring programs, which are an extracurricular activity that can help students who don't have anyone at home to help them with homework, who have missed learning because of absence or, who were just distracted.

Picture the student who wakes up at 5:00 a.m. to get her younger siblings and herself ready for school. It's raining. She has to catch the bus by 5:30 a.m. to get her to school across town in time, which takes about 90 minutes on a good day. It takes just as long for her to get home. This is the story for many Baltimore City students who have to rely on an unreliable public transportation system; a system that offers no protection for the

students. In other school systems, the bus drivers undergo background checks, they are trained and there are only students on the bus. In Baltimore City, students are vulnerable on a daily basis because they have to use a public transportation system. If there were adequate funding to have programs in all regions of the city, then students would not have to travel across town for a special program.

The Baltimore City Youth Commission urges the Kirwan Commission to ensure that poverty is addressed because all children deserve and are constitutionally entitled to a quality education. In an article for the Texas Law Review, Justice Kagan said: "To Justice Marshall, the notion that government would act to deprive poor children of an education—of an opportunity to improve their status and better their lives—was anathema." We are concerned that the change in method for determining the number of students in poverty undercounts the actual number of students. Previously, BCPS used FARMS as the measure. It no longer does and the current bar is lower, meaning before you had to be poor, now you have to be really poor. Therefore, we advocate for a greater weighting of poverty in order to account for the change and to better ensure equity.

In Baltimore City we have community schools, charter schools, zone schools, magnet schools, and schools that blend the above. However, as noted above, all too often children have to take public transportation across town to access the program they need. Children should be able to access programs in their communities and quality education should not depend on winning a lottery.

The adequacy study recommended, and we concur, that the following four strategies should be accounted for in the foundation funding: prekindergarten, summer school, afterschool programs, and finally, well-qualified community schools coordinators who connect schools to local supporting resources. Summer school programming is especially important given that the summer was made two weeks longer by executive order and there is much research indicating that all children experience summer learning loss, but children in poverty experience it most profoundly. The extended summer, which results in more learning loss, means when students return to school in September they need more remediation, more tutoring, and more assistance just to get them back to where they were the previous June. Once a child is behind, that child is more likely to be absent and to drop out of school. Second, we have heard from many students that they have little to no access to arts, music, athletic programs, and other

special content areas. These programs have been on the chopping block so many times in Baltimore City that they barely exist at some schools. Students deserve access to special content area programming—particularly students in poverty who do not have the means for private music, dance, and art or the funds to participate in what few recreational sports programs exist. Third, it is critical to address school staffing. Students deserve reasonable class sizes taught by qualified teachers who are incentivized to stay teaching. The in and out of teachers and use of substitutes does not provide a stable learning environment. Fourth, students need to feel safe in school and going to and from school. There are not enough social workers, school based mental health providers, counselors, special educators, and meaningful alternative programs to assist students who act out or who have serious behavioral health issues.

I leave you with a quote from Nelson Mandela: Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. We, the youth of Maryland, the youth of Baltimore City are the future. Please ensure that Maryland's public schools have what is needed to provide students with the tools they need to change the world. Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Kirwan Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education**  
**Supporting High Poverty Schools: School-Based Social Services Coordination and Trauma Services**  
**October 12, 2017**

Bronwyn Mayden, MSW  
Assistant Dean, University of Maryland School of Social Work  
Executive Director, Promise Heights  
525 West Redwood Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201

Chairman Kirwan, and distinguished Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today on the Kirwan Commission. My name is Bronwyn Mayden, and I am an Assistant Dean of the School of Social Work and the Executive Director of Promise Heights – a place-based initiative working in West Baltimore schools to improve educational outcomes and ensure families are healthy and successful. We operate five Community Schools, each one staffed by a full-time licensed social worker who serve as our Community School Coordinators.

**The impact of poverty and learning**

Open any newspaper or magazine today and you will find an article highlighting the failures of today's school districts: low graduation rates, high suspension rates, and poor test scores, with low-income children and children of color performing the worst of all (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010). In response, superintendents have implemented several strategies that have shown promising results, including Response to Intervention (RTI), and Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS). Like many districts, Baltimore City has embraced many of these strategies as well as increased professional development and cultural competency; however, social determinants such as poverty have a major impact on student outcomes (Reardon, 2011). Poverty affects intervening factors that, in turn, affect outcomes for people. These factors include students' health and well-being; literacy and language development; access to physical and material resources; and level of mobility.

In the U.S. 37% of African American and Latino schoolchildren attend schools in which 76% or more of the student body is receiving free and reduced price school meals (FARM), as compared to 6% of white students. In Baltimore City as a whole, approximately 60% of children in schools receive free or reduced lunch; however, the schools in the West Baltimore community of Upton/Druid Heights all have FARM rates in the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile. In Upton/Druid Heights, over 62% of the children live in poverty, 94% live in families of single parent households, and the community has one of the highest rates of violent crime in Baltimore.

This data indicates a need for school districts to address issues of poverty and trauma in order to provide additional resources for schools where significant percentages of the student body live in low income and under-resourced communities. While superintendents encourage schools to develop various strategies to address these issues, we must also consider the academic impact of poverty on our students' ability to focus in school.

At our schools, it is not unusual for students to report not having enough food at home, and many families come to us to request assistance for rent and utility bills. Approximately 50% of our high school students reported they are holding jobs to help their families pay for basic household expenses such as rent or utility bills, and approximately 20% of our high school students are couch-surfing since they are no longer living at home.

Reardon (2011) found that the disparity in achievement between rich and poor students is now double that between black and white students. Income inequality affects all aspects of a child's academic success. I believe children cannot learn when they are hungry, exhausted, or living in distress. Our schools need to offer a strong academic curriculum – but also provide non-academic support for students living in poverty.

### **What services do students need in high-poverty schools?**

While schools are one of the only public institutions held accountable for larger societal issues such as homelessness, hunger, and poverty, many in the education community minimize or ignore the impact of poverty on student achievement and instead point to discrete educational solutions—improving the quality of teachers, implementing a common core curriculum, using specific instructional techniques, increasing the number of instructional minutes, etc. We know students need assistance with all types of services.

I want to tell you about one of our students and her struggles to graduate from high school. Our Community School Coordinator (CSC) remembers her first meeting with Deborah\*. She smelled of smoke because the night before her family's apartment had caught on fire – and she was wearing the clothes she had on when she left her home. She lost everything. Her family had few social supports to draw upon. The CSC helped the family with **basic needs** – finding another place to live – and provided **clothes** and **food** from the school's food pantry. But she also noticed Deborah was suffering from depression and needed **mental health counseling**. Because of her depression, Deborah was not attending school and didn't have many friends. The CSC is a licensed clinical social worker and she provided Deborah with the counseling she needed. Deborah wanted to work and the CSC found her a **job** – her salary was used to help pay some of the family's bills. She wanted to graduate from high school, but readily acknowledged that her survival needs pre-empted her schoolwork. The CSC and many committed teachers worked with Deborah to create a plan to help her get back on track, and she graduated this past summer. She is working at the airport in one of the restaurants. In contrast, her brother attended a school with no CSC on staff – and he dropped out.

### **Building a team to support students in high-poverty schools**

Deborah's story and the barriers to success are common to students living in poverty. Our students come to us with little to no family support; we provide services, clothing and food, referrals for mental health and substance abuse counseling, job referrals, gang intervention, and family crisis intervention (rent assistance, energy assistance, and legal aid referrals for civil and criminal matters).

While this work is typical of CSCs in high-poverty schools, we need a more intentional, comprehensive strategy to serve students. Promise Heights uses Integrated Student Supports in tandem with education reforms that focus on teacher quality and curricular improvements. Integrated Student Supports are a school-based approach to promoting students' academic barriers to achievement. These resources range from traditional tutoring and mentoring to provision of a broader set of supports such as linking students to physical and mental health care and connecting families to parent education, family counseling, food banks, or employment assistance.

Schools serving children who live in high-poverty communities need additional support beyond the traditional educational model. The ideal model for supporting these schools would include the following staff members:

**Full-Time Social Worker**—provides case management, referral, and crisis intervention to students and their families (currently in Baltimore City Public Schools, social workers only serve students with

\*Student's name has been changed

Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) which is approximately 25% of the school population. The other students get no social work services).

**Community School Coordinator**—responsible for the implementation of a menu of needs-driven, high-quality programs and services in adherence with the Community Schools Model including but not limited to early childhood programs, expanded learning and enrichment opportunities, health series, parent/family engagement, adult education, director material assistance, and interventions targeted to chronically absent students.

**Psychologist**—provides expertise in mental health, learning, and behavior to help children succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally.

**Guidance Counselor**—provides academic, career, college access/affordability/admission, and social-emotional competencies to all students.

**School-Based Health Clinic**—provides on-site medical, dental, and mental health services that promote the health and educational success of school-aged children and adults. One SBHC serving several nearby schools would be staffed by a full-time nurse practitioner, while other schools would have a full-time nurse in the health suite. Each health suite would use telemedicine to communicate with the nurse practitioner who can diagnose, write prescriptions, and provide case management support.

To be effective, all of these staff members need to work together and use a common data management system to track student needs and outcomes over time for the students they serve. The database provides for secure collection of data including student reviews, individual student plans, service referrals, and service providers. This ensures not only accountability, but also monitoring and evaluating implementation and fidelity of the intervention throughout the school year.

## **Conclusion**

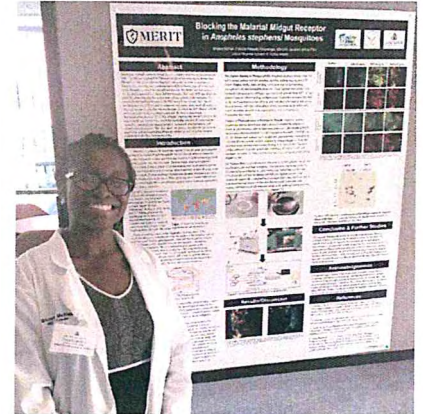
Funding for these recommendations will be a concern, but I believe it is fiscally prudent. In an uncertain economic time, when poverty rates are rising and resources are becoming scarcer, these factors assume greater importance for the future, and it is increasingly necessary to identify cost-effective interventions. I do know that the services we provide to students save lives.

Thank you.



Greetings Chairman Kirwan and other distinguished members of the Commission. Thank you for taking the time to hear voices of the community and I hope you use our comments to inform your decisions. My name is Shatera McNair and I am a Brancati Fellow with Strong Schools Maryland and Senior at City College High School.

I want to tell you my story, which is sadly not unlike a lot of what you heard tonight. I wanted to speak tonight because it matters that you continue to hear the real impact of an inadequate system. You have a real opportunity to be **bold** and create a world-class education system for all students in Maryland that will determine their outcomes for at least the next 15 years. I will be graduating next year and I hope to attend University of Maryland College Park (shout out to you, Chancellor Kirwan), but I care about my city, my state and those that come after me. I have learned that you are working from the report developed by NCEE called the “9 Building Blocks for a World-Class Education System.” Let me tell you why that framework matters and how it impacts me every day.



Building block 2 insists on providing more resources to “at risk” students (The reports language, not mine). This is essential. This year, due to a lack of funds, our class schedule was cut from 7 to 6 classes. Not only that, but we had to go to an A day and B day. This means I lost the ability to attend critical classes like health AND, from those classes I do get, I only see the teachers for half the time I should. I am trying to become a doctor, I am being short changed by the system. I deserve the time and classes that will prepare me for college, so I can succeed. Also, before I continue, can you please make sure the definition of “at risk students” takes into account many peers of mine who are undocumented. They are just as deserving of a world class education but can be left behind because they are often invisible to the system.

Our student to teacher ratio has ballooned. In some classes, we don’t even have enough space for all of the students in the room. We lost awesome teachers because we could not afford that many teachers anymore. Some students in younger grades do not even have electives anymore. Access to the arts and electives is critical to our success.

Building block 5 says “assure an abundant supply of highly qualified teachers.” I love my teachers but it is unfair to us and to them to have them teaching outside their expertise. We need to make sure we have enough highly qualified teachers for every classroom. This should be a priority.

And finally, while I think all of the building blocks are important and must be addressed, my time is only limited to 3 minutes. I want to make sure there are strong supports for children and their families before they arrive at school, as building block 1 says. I care about those that come behind me and early childhood education is a no brainer. Don’t just settle for universal pre-k and pre-k 3 for low income students. Be aggressive and say what we know. We need high quality childcare for kids as young as 6 weeks old and supports for mothers who need it.

You have a major opportunity to leave a lasting legacy on this state and students spanning from Baltimore City to the Eastern shore, from Western Maryland down to St. Mary’s County. Every student deserves a world class education.

Produce a **bold** report. The community is behind a **bold** report. We are building an army across the state ready to fight for a comprehensive set of reforms. Be **bold**, we stand behind you and are ready to fight.

Observations, Recommendations and Suggestions for Consideration  
Presented to  
The Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence In Education

James M. Lindsay, Jr.  
October 12, 2017

Maryland has some of the best Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) in the country. Our public IHEs are second to none and attract students from all over the world. New buildings continue to be built on various campuses on a regular basis, thus expanding their programs, capacity and legitimacy in academia.

In contrast, our preK-12 system is not as note worthy. Quite often, parents decide what counties and neighborhoods they will move into based on the schools in the catchment area. Also, in many LEAs, new schools have not been built in 5, 10, 15, or 20 years. Parents are at a lost because there is such unevenness between schools in the same system.

To the best of my knowledge there have been at least two commissions prior to the Kirwan Commission that were given the task of submitting reports to the legislature regarding the overall improvement needed for our preK-12 educational system (the Sondheim Commission and the Thornton Commission). Both of these commissions were similar in that they identified **funding** or the lack of funding in public education to be a contributing factor in regards to student performance in our public school systems. Their reports provided and recommended specific considerations for increasing budgets to local LEAs by creating new funding formula criteria.

Also, as we follow the concerns of the ACLU as they partner with the Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) and the Baltimore Education Coalition (BEC), we find that they too, put emphasis on the importance of increased funding and program in order to prepare our public schools students for 21<sup>st</sup> century career and college readiness.



Finally, from the excerpts read in regards to the Adequacy Study: Draft Final Report prepared for MSDE Submitted by APA Consulting September 30, 2016, one can surmise how we have arrived at our current status. It is from these readings and being a lifelong educator that we make the following observations, recommendations and suggestions. They are as follows:

I too believe that funding is crucial in order to improve preK–12 public education and without proper funding, preK-12 will never improve. If the other commission reports had been implemented as written, we would not be here today. **Educators** are expected to provide consistent and sustainable academic growth for students; however, the **commitment** to fund education has not been **consistent or sustained**. We spend tax payer's money to ask commissions to research and present findings in reference to the state of public education and to provide the recommendations. However, after the report is written and submitted, the persons who hold the purse strings find reasons not to fund education as the findings indicate. Our representatives who hold the purse strings for our children's education must recognize education to be as important as public safety and jobs. Actually, the three are inextricably intertwined (in a **healthy society**, community and/or neighborhood where the educational system is excellent – there will be **less crime and less unemployment**. The public educational system is an ***unsung hero and driving force*** in a thriving community, state, and/or country).

On another note, it was interesting to notice in the Adequacy Study how the words “adequate” and “excellence” were used. There is a difference between the expectations of an adequate education vs. that of an excellent education. The commissions incorporate the use of the word “excellence” in their title, while APA estimates the cost of an “adequate” education for students in Maryland.

Even though the words adequate and excellence do not share the same meaning, for the sake of this recommendation we will make use of both terms. This suggestion is as follows:

We may need to have more than one plan. If **Adequate** represents a “C” plan, then **Good** represents a “B” plan, and **Excellence** represents an “A” plan. Each plan would be all inclusive of resources down to the classroom, including but not limited to budget (money), guidelines, expectations, class size, trajectory etc. Since both the state and the local government provides money for the LEAs, the state would have to work in concert with the local governments in order to determine which plan would be used for all of the children in the state. The cost of the plans would differ, which means that an appropriation of funds would follow each plan from both sides and could not be reversed for that year. Also, at the end of the year, purse holders may decide to stay with the present plan or make a change based on affordability or other factors, (example: move from an “A” plan to a “B” plan) they would inform all stake holders (including the public) of the change so that adjustments would be made based on the plan changes. The same would be true if the purse holders were able to afford a better plan for the children (example: move from a “C” plan to a “B” plan). Many other businesses use a flexible scale (example: health care and insurance companies, etc.).

The concept and strategy of using a multi-plan system provides added clarity for all stake holders because it ties funding to expectations and is therefore much more equitable than expecting MSDE, school systems, school personnel, and children to meet expectation of an “A” plan while receiving “C” plan money. It will also bring to the forefront, added transparency for parents to see how important the state values education. Each plan must be meticulously created and implemented, with expectations, responsibility, accountability, and guidelines clearly expressed.

The monitoring and evaluation will be the final component of the plan. The state or MSDE will need to create the office of Inspector General



for education (IG). This office will have the expressed purpose of monitoring criteria compliance and would have the authority to temporarily suspend school system personnel for non compliance. (Example: the IG may randomly visit a classroom or at a parent's request in regards to student capacity as per the plan). If there are violations after several visits and recommendations sent to the Superintendent/ CEO and copied to the State Superintendent, the IG could temporarily suspend the Superintendent/CEO of the LEA pending the final decision of the State Superintendent.

### Other Abbreviated Suggestions and Recommendations

- We need **multiple focused approaches on Education (We need more educational tracks)**. There has been some conversation that America's future will rely on innovation and in STEM Research and Development. I am hoping that some manufacturing will continue to exist in the US because all students will not attend an IHE for UG, G, or PHD, but they will still need to be employable. We need career paths for them and we need research to see how we can improve upon our vocational tracts and attract manufacturing companies to this state. Our high schools will need to create internship programs with companies so that they will have skilled workers.
- **There is a great need for early student behavior intervention. This intervention will not only address academics, but will be inclusive of acceptable behavior in society and in schools. We may need to create public boarding schools** (similar to Old Fields a private boarding school and Seed Academy). It requires more money on the front end but saves tremendously on the back end. This concept would help in two ways. It would help students who are focused on education to stay focused without the distraction from students who are not focused on education. It would also allow students, with their parent's permission, to attend a school on a campus where education, proper conduct, and appropriate behavior will be

the rule of the day. Students will be immersed and will be able to become a part of a different type of environment. There are currently some boarding schools, but they are usually for the wealthy. The extra money spent on the front end for the educational system will save us on the back end in regards to the boarding facilities currently provided in the correctional system (prisons). The educational boarding schools could be housed in the LEA or at an IHE, but kept completely separate.

- For the student who is focused on attending college, we need to have and/or expand a rigorous preK-14 program for them that would be taught either in the same school by their teachers or on a college campus or both (college text books would be used for the last two years). **Students would earn 2 years of transcribed college credits while still being in a public high school. This would allow the students to enter a four year college of their choice, based on acceptance, for an additional two years and would represent a savings for the parent and/or the child. An extended school day or year may also be necessary in order to accomplish this change in policy.**
- If schools are to be held accountable for student learning via state testing, then the **state should give and grade two tests during the same school year. One test should be given at the beginning of the year and the other should be given near the end of the year in order to determine the student's academic growth.** That would be a fairer assessment of the teacher's effectiveness.
- We need educational leaders who have a vested interest in the system where they lead and are not only the "Best and the Brightest." They also have to have and use "Common Sense."
- Parents must be present in our schools and participate in the PTA, PTO, and other organizations on a regular basis. We need proactive parents as well as reactive parents. They must also be present in the voter's booth to vote for individuals who represent the best interest of our children.

- In addition, college prep at an earlier age for students and parents is needed. Middle school students and their parents need to be provided with articulation opportunities to visit IHE campuses and speak with their academic, program and finance offerings personnel (I was able to play a small part in a program from USM that did exactly that and the improved perception for college attainability was tremendous, based on the parents surveyed).

## **In Conclusion**

Adequate school funding is a major issue because education is still seen as the gate way to a bright and prosperous future for our children. We understand that if our country is to maintain leadership in the world, our schools (especially our public schools) must produce those leaders. Our nation requires us to produce world class scholars in order to compete in a 21<sup>st</sup> century global economy.



Chairman, Budget & Appropriations Committee  
Chairman, Judiciary & Legislative Investigations Committee  
Chairman, Biennial Audits Oversight Commission

Labor Committee  
Land Use & Transportation Committee  
Taxation, Finance, & Economic Development Committee



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## TESTIMONY TO THE COMMISSION ON INNOVATION & EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2017

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Commission on Innovation & Excellence in Education,

My name is Eric Costello and I am the Councilman for Baltimore City's 11th District, which includes the Central Business District, Downtown's Westside, Central West Baltimore, Midtown, and the South Baltimore Peninsula. I also Chair the City Council's Budget & Appropriations Committee.

As you are all aware, City Schools was facing a \$130 million structural deficit heading into FY2018. In response, our City made an unprecedented budgetary commitment to City Schools for FY2018, as well as for the following two years. Specifically, Mayor Pugh provided an additional \$22.4 million in the FY2018 budget (City Council Bill 17-0065 and 17-0082); and committed an additional \$32.3 million in FY2019; and \$35.5 million in FY2020. Despite this unprecedented commitment to our students, during our budget negotiations with the Mayor, the City Council then prioritized an additional \$3 million in fiscal year 2018 (City Council Bill 17-0084); and as part of our agreement, the Mayor agreed to commit an additional \$3 million above the aforementioned commitments for both fiscal year 2019 and 2020.

All of this was in addition to the Governor's second supplemental budget, which included \$23.7 million in State grants for full day Pre-K and a declining enrollment grant. Furthermore, Delegate McIntosh was able to secure an additional \$13.9 million in spending relief for payments to 21st Century School Construction, increased payment on pensions, and MTA bus passes. Finally, City Schools Central Office identified cuts of \$30 million. We couldn't do this on our own, and we are certainly grateful to our partners at the State as well as the sacrifices made by City Schools Central Office. While we nearly were able to close the gap, the scenario we experienced this fiscal year is in no way sustainable.

Our City's revenue generating potential is simply maxed out. We have the highest tax rates on real property, personal property, and income in the State. We also have the bottle tax dedicated to 21st Century School Construction, a 10% amusement tax, a 20% parking tax, and a 4% telephone tax, all of which are the highest in the State. We have commitments for implementation of the US DOJ Consent Decree, estimated at approximately \$10 – 15 million per year. Our EPA Mandated Sewer Consent Decree will cost over \$1 billion, which will be impacted by rising labor costs which will inevitably result in increased utility service fees on top of the 33% increase incurred over the current 3 year period. This is on top of over \$800 million invested over the past 15 years to comply with EPA's Consent Decree. We also maintain our own streets. This is all coupled with steadily declining highway user revenues over the past few decades and demonstrably high infrastructure needs.

This fiscal year, we appropriated nearly \$500 million to our Police Department, which many would agree may not enough to deal with our significant public safety needs. Our fixed costs, which continue to rise each year,



including pensions, retiree health, debt services, and our MOE to City Schools, is for the first time in excess of \$800 million. We are responsible for maintaining an aging water system which provides water service to Baltimore City and Baltimore County, and also provides raw or finished water in large volumes directly to Anne Arundel, Carroll, Hartford, and Howard Counties. This will cost over \$200 million this fiscal year. These are just three of the many areas that we are either mandated to, or simply cannot afford to not prioritize.

The City is also picking up the cost of transportation for students with special needs, school nurses, crossing guards, and after school and community school programming. In addition, we must contribute \$20 million per year to the 21st Century School Construction Program.

Unlike other counties in the State suffering high rates of poverty, Baltimore City's budget must absorb many of the aforementioned costs. These challenges and commitments aside, our school system has significant local challenges, including a high percentage of students with special needs, many stemming from environmental challenges such as exposure to lead paint, a high percentage of students whose second language is English, and disparate pockets of poverty throughout the City resulting in the need for extensive wrap-around services.

I recognize that Baltimore City provides the lowest percentage of total funding to its school system out of each system in the State. That said, the City stepped up in a significant way during this past year, unlike we have ever done before. However, the new formula must ensure that the State meets its constitutional mandate to provide a quality education to every student in Maryland, including in Baltimore City. It should also be appreciative of not only the local effort made, but of the challenges each locality must deal with in addition to education. We are fully committed to providing an enriched education to every student in Baltimore City, no matter what. We want to give more to our students, and if we could, we would. But we need your help to ensure there is an equitable formula in place so that our students have every advantage possible afforded to them. After all, they are our future.

Thank you for your commitment to this important work and your time today, and I would be happy to answer any questions.



Kirwan Commission Public Hearing  
Baltimore Polytechnic High School, Baltimore,  
MD

Remarks by: Kuana Holley-Burris

10/12/2017

Good evening members of the Commission. My name is Kuana Holley-Burris. I am the proud parent of two current Baltimore City Public School students attending City Neighbors Charter School and Joseph Briscoe Academy. I am also the parent of an alumnist of Baltimore School for the Arts, as well as the current Board President of City Neighbors Charter School. I am so pleased to be able to address all of you about the fundamental right of all students in the state of Maryland to have fair and equitable funding, especially the students here in Baltimore. As you already know, Baltimore has one of the highest poverty rates in the state. Many of our students are coming from a home life where parents may struggle to make ends meet. School should be a safe and engaging haven for them where they can get the tools they need to thrive in life. Some of these tools would include wrap around services, increasing the availability of trade programs, and the ability to offer smaller class sizes. Statistics show that Baltimore City students are some of the most vulnerable in our state. Many of our students suffer from PTSD and other forms of trauma. Combine that with a school system that has been historically underfunded and you get children who have lost hope. Education has been the key to many people changing their lives from impoverished to flourishing. That education starts as soon as they enter into a school building. However, it is hard to hope when your school is falling apart around you: no water fountains due to lead contamination, mold in your classroom, or a host of other environmental concerns that our generations old school buildings are suffering with. Old buildings, with inadequate technology, that lack of central air, and functioning heating systems make it challenging for teachers to teach and students to learn.

Our students deserve to be able to know what it will be like in the work force that they will join. To do that we need to be able to provide them with the tools to be able to succeed such as current books, lap tops and/or tablets, opportunities for field trips, the ability to engage in hands on learning in the classroom, or having a full range of classes including arts, humanities, health, and the other countless innovations that are available to classroom teachers.

Increasing the available funding to City Schools will allow our students to see growth and improvement in their education and life.

Thank you for your time.  
Kuana Holley-Burris  
Parent  
Board President City Neighbors Charter School

## Kirwan Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education

Brittany R. Parham-Patterson, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
University of Maryland School of Medicine  
Center for School Mental Health

### *I. Introduction*

- a. The Center for School Mental Health was established in 1995. Our Center focuses on advancing school mental health policy, research, practice and training.\*
- b. As a program, we have clinicians providing mental health promotion, prevention, and intervention services to 27 Baltimore City Schools and focus our activities on low-income communities exposed to high rates of stress and trauma.

### *II. Prevalence of Mental Health Disorders in Children (Wade, Mansour, & Guo, 2008; Black & Krisshnakuma, 1998)*

- a. National data suggests that in a classroom of 25 students, 5 will have a diagnosable mental health condition.\*
- b. Less than half, 2 or fewer, will receive services for symptoms (16-33%).\*
- c. In areas of concentrated poverty:
  - i. The population is often individuals of minority status
  - ii. Children are more exposed to violent crimes, gang activities, house fires, incarceration, victimization (e.g., racial trauma), and maltreatment.
  - iii. 83% of youth are likely to report experiencing one or more traumatic events\*
  - iv. Urban males experience higher rates of exposure to violent traumas (e.g., murders, assault, DV)
  - v. Women are four times more likely to develop PTSD
  - vi. African American and Hispanic Americans use mental health services at about ½ the rate of White Americans in the past year
  - vii. Children from low-income families are at greater risk and have higher prevalence of mental health problems\*
- d. There is hope as national data suggests: of the small percentage of those that receive service in national data, 2 of the 5 in need, 70-80% access the care in schools.\*

### *III. Why Schools (New Freedom Commission, 2007)*

- a. “Defacto” mental health systems because they are natural, universal systems\*
- b. Other advantages include: Less time lost from school, greater application of treatment in the child’s real context, less threatening environment, greater access to all youth, cost effective, and greater potential impact on environment and educational outcomes.

IV. *Direct and Indirect Outcomes associated with SMH services ((Weisz, Sandler, Durlak & Anton, 2005)*

- a. Research suggests that receipt of quality SMH services improves: academic achievement, graduation rates, attendance, and teacher retention while decreasing discipline referrals and drop-out rates (by increasing factors that increase a student's ability to succeed and reducing factors that interfere).\*
  - i. State Dropout Rate is 2.57% while Baltimore City Dropout Rate is 5.06% (Maryland Report Card-2016; <http://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/>).
  - ii. State graduation rate is 89.30% and Baltimore City is 75.08%
- b. Also reduces costs of untreated mental health problems, reduces economic/social burden of multiple systems when mental health problems are not addressed early\*
- c. On the other hand, the myriad *consequences* of untreated mental health conditions are detrimental to the individual and family, as well as society.
  - i. 70% of youth in juvenile settings have mental health diagnoses
  - ii. 90% of those who die by suicide have an underlying mental illness and is the 3rd leading cause of death in individuals 14-25.\*
  - iii. Untreated mental health conditions contribute to higher levels of unemployment, lower wages, increased criminal activity, poorer health, more reliance on public assistance, and lower civic engagement
  - iv. Ultimately, serious mental illness costs America 193.2 billion in lost earnings every year\*

V. *What's needed (National Association of School Psychology, 2007)*

- a. A continuum of school mental health services to effectively address the breadth of students' needs, particularly in areas of concentrated poverty with higher rates of mental health diagnoses and less access to services.
  - i. Multitier systems of support (MTSS) promotes wellness for all, assesses and gives support for populations at risk for specific problems (e.g., PTSD), and provides targeted evidenced-based intervention to youth with identified mental health disorders.\*
  - ii. This also includes provision of consultation and training to other school community members including teachers, school based staff, and parents/caregivers.\*
  - iii. Why? Helps to reduce stigma, prevent progression of MH problems, and is cost effective (prevention is cheaper than intervention)

VI. *Who's needed (National Association of School Psychology; NASP)?*

- a. School Psychologists approximately 1 to 500 students\*
- b. Social worker (1:400)\*
- c. School Counselor (1: 250)\*
  - i. Baltimore City Equivalent for 83,666 students in 2016 would be approximately

1. School psychologists (167)
  2. Social Workers (209)
  3. School counselor (335)
- d. Barriers to consider
- i. Mental health team coverage varies widely by school. Ex: school has a school psychologist but only 2 days a week.
  - ii. School psychologists and Social Workers, particularly in areas of concentrated poverty are often overburdened by their case load and special education requirements.\*

1. *Baltimore City*

Elementary	12.8%
Middle	18.0%
High	17.8%

2. *Statewide*

Elementary	11.4%
Middle	11.6%
High	10.9%

- iii. Limited time and resources reduce opportunities to engage with general education populations and provision of multi-tiered supports.
- e. Center for School Mental Health, School Mental Health Services
- i. The School Mental Health program provides support in 27 schools to provide school-wide, promotion, prevention and intervention services.\* Practitioners are licensed social workers, psychologists, counselors, psychiatrists, and graduate trainees.
    1. Coverage varies by site. Cost of 1 full time equivalent (FTE) is approximately 80K, requiring creative funding strategies.\*
      - a. For example, utilization of graduate students—mental health trainees, to provide care under supervision of licensed practitioners.
    2. Access to SMH services is variable year-to-year, as is access to school psychologist, social workers and counselors, and too closely associated with funding challenges in schools.

VII. *Community Voice: Benefits of SMH Services*

- a. A *7<sup>th</sup> grade student*: “Working with you helps me to deal with problems better and do better in school.”
- b. A *parent* of a child with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD): “I feel like my family wouldn’t make it without them and all they do”

- c. *A 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Teacher noted* “This school is a much healthier and happier place because of mental health services”

*VIII. Summary*

- a. Mental health diagnoses are common in youth and onset occurs prior to 14 y/o in 50% of cases. Onset occurs before 24 in 75% of cases. A small percentage of individuals that need mental health support receive needed care; of those, 70% access care in school—schools are defacto mental health systems. Research suggests that treatment improves academic and community outcomes while untreated mental health conditions result in significant individual and societal costs. Schools need a continuum of mental health supports but limited resources (e.g., time, staffing, money) affect access to vital resources.

## Accounts of a Baltimore City Schools Teacher in a Title I School

### What would happen if mental health services weren't accessible to the school?

**Student A**, whose father died the first day of school would just have to deal with it.

**Student B**, without running water in her home and is being teased for being dirty would just have to deal with it.

**Student C**, whose mother is doing her best alone, without a job, without a formal education, without identified positive male role models for her son, would have to continue making it through, one day at a time. She will continue to not celebrate anything so her children don't get their hopes up and then experience disappointment.

*I could go on and on.* Mental Health providers are available to help triage care and identify needed resources.

### What's still needed related to mental health care?

We (i.e., teachers) should be operating at the top of the pyramid. It's too much for us to do alone—we need mental health providers and interdisciplinary collaboration to meet student needs.





# The Baltimore Teachers Union

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AFT 340 AFL-CIO  
Seton Business Park  
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Baltimore, MD 21215-3209

Testimony of Erasmo Barrera,  
Math Teacher at Knowledge and Success Academy, Baltimore City Public Schools  
Member, Baltimore Teachers Union  
Before the Commission on Excellence and Innovation in Education  
October 12, 2017

Good evening Chairman Kirwan and members of the Committee of Excellence and Innovation in Education. My name is Erasmo Barrera, and I teach Algebra I and II to students in grades 9 through 12 at Knowledge and Success Academy here in Baltimore City. I appreciate the time you have granted me to speak directly to an issue that must not be overlooked as you consider revisions to the state's formula for funding public schools. As I am sure you are aware, Baltimore City is in a situation unlike any other in this state. We are a city stricken with the problems associated with poverty, yet surrounded by affluence and privilege that is an unsurprising characteristic of the wealthiest state in America. We have by far the highest number of students who live in poverty. As speaker Busch once put it, there are more students who are homeless attending Baltimore City Schools than there are students in some entire jurisdictions. We also have the highest percentage of students who are eligible for special education. And finally, we have a higher than average number of students who are English Language Learners, and who come from families who have recently immigrated to the United States. This makes the issue of improving education in Baltimore much more difficult, I would argue, than any other locality in Maryland. I know this as both a teacher and a participant in the recent B3 program, which many of you know was a joint project between the BTU and City Schools to encourage families to re-enroll their children into our schools.

Let me tell you about my experiences in the classroom, and how a lack of appropriate funding has harmed the children of Baltimore. We have seen many budget cuts at KASA. As of late last year, some of the resources that we need to are no longer available. For example, if teachers want to copy materials here at KASA they must provide the copy paper. Teachers cannot freely walk up to a copier and make copies as needed to deliver instruction. Unfortunately, there are shortages of printers, ink and paper. We must submit print requests 24 hours ahead of time and provide the paper. Our students are typically several years behind grade level in Reading and Math. A teacher often must modify lessons on the fly in order to meet students where they are academically. Having to worry about paper and ink is one stumbling block that would be great not to have to worry about. As a result, planning time is not optimized because of the extra time wasted trying to secure resources to get materials printed and or copied. If changes need to be made within the 24 hour window, then it is a nightmare.

My students come from difficult backgrounds. Many have faced trauma, including violence and death in their lives. They tend to not have strong role models and struggle to make the connection between complex math topics and potential careers for themselves. Consequently, they are often reluctant to dive in to the struggle necessary to master complex topics because they do not see themselves using them in their careers. Teaching them is very challenging because they often lack foundational skills and Math is very unforgiving: one wrong turn and you are lost. Additionally, I am sure that many students that I teach even though they are not diagnosed have experienced enough trauma that makes learning more difficult for them. Because of this we teachers need the resources that enable us to modify and differentiate instruction in real time. These budget cuts continue to impact our ability to do so.

I am not surprised when I hear that studies meant to look at the adequacy of the current funding formula say what we have now falls short, to the tune of over \$2 billion statewide. However, I must insist that, as you consider revisions to the formula, you give much more weight to those students who live in poverty or who are English Language Learners, as their needs are unlike the traditional students living in other parts of the state.



I will close by pointing out a fact, uncovered during your work by the National Center for Education and the Economy, which both shocks and disappoints me as a teacher and a resident of Maryland. It is purely indefensible that a state that is considered the wealthiest in the country, ranks merely 41<sup>st</sup> compared to other states when it comes to increasing funding for poorer districts over wealthier ones. That is the story of Baltimore City in a nutshell—surrounded by a sea of affluence, our children are left out. I ask that you rectify this injustice by recommending a formula that both increases the overall amount of state aid to public schools by at least the recommended amount of \$2 billion, and assure that the vast majority of that new \$2 million go to children who need it most—those who live in poverty, are English Language Learners, or who qualify for special education. Thank you for your time.

# The Baltimore Teachers Union

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AFT 340 AFL-CIO  
Seton Business Park  
5800 Metro Drive, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Baltimore, MD 21215-3209

Testimony of Sena Robinson  
Music Teacher, Monarch Academy, Baltimore City Public Schools  
Member, Baltimore Teachers Union  
Before the Commission on Excellence and Innovation in Education  
October 12, 2017

Good evening chairman Kirwan and members of the Committee of Excellence and Innovation in Education. My name is Sena Robinson, and I teach General Music to students in grades K through 8, in a Baltimore City Public School. I am here this evening to talk about my experiences in the classroom, and the ways my instruction helps students in their education. I do this as a way to inform your decisions as you look to change and modify the funding formula for state aid to public schools. I will note before I begin that the independent research studies contracted to inform the work of the commission have illustrated with research that which many Baltimore City Teachers know through experience—that the amount of public aid to the schools in the state is woefully inadequate to meet the needs of our students—to the tune of almost \$2 billion in additional state aid, and that even though Maryland is the wealthiest state in the nation, when it comes to funding for poor school districts, Maryland is among the most regressive in the nation.

I teach at a public charter, with a population of over 1000. The students represent various neighborhoods across the city, 80% of whom qualify for Title I services. Many of our students face numerous challenges that impede their ability to succeed, ranging from homelessness to high levels of poverty. There are students who have to move between various family members, and as such they are not afforded the opportunity to have consistent structure. This manifests itself in the classroom: they are unable to focus, are tired, sleepy and are also hungry, thus impeding their ability to be successful in school. Arts instruction can foster school success. When students are taught by a certified, quality arts instructor, in a sequential and consistent manner their lives are more enriched in numerous ways, both tested and untested. Arts instruction offers our students an opportunity to focus and express themselves. For anyone who has played an instrument or sung in school class or choir can attest, focus leads to success. The Arts may provide outlet for students to express their hurt, pain and even hopes. Having consistent access to the Arts allows these and other students an outlet for frustrations, whether it be through poetry, dance or music. Social skills as well as problem solving skills are also enhanced since students must work cooperatively to produce an artifact. There are also the academic or test related benefits to having arts instruction: students excel in subjects such as Math and Science. Research has shown that underprivileged children tend to have lower language skills as a result of linguistic deprivation, which is defined as limited access to hearing complex sentences, words and concepts (Kraus, 2014). Kraus's past research has shown that music education caused greater gains in speech processing, and thus reading. In her current project Kraus realized the type of music education offered also influenced how great these gains would be. For example, students who learned to play a musical instrument showed stronger language skills than students who took music appreciation courses..." Dr. Nina Kraus, Northwestern University.

There is overwhelming research that shows how the study of fine arts positively affects the lives and academic achievement of students who study them. For example:

A study of 7,500 university students revealed that music majors scored the highest reading scores among all majors including English, biology, chemistry and math. ~ *The Case for Music in the Schools, Phi Delta Kappa*

Students who were exposed to music-based lessons scored a full 100% higher on fractions tests than those who learned in the conventional manner. ~ *Neurological Research and Music Education Statistics*

The schools that produced the highest academic achievement in the United States today are spending 20% to 30% of the day on the arts, with special emphasis on music. ~ *International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement*

Music enhances the process of learning. The systems they nourish, which include our integrated sensory, attention, cognitive, emotional and motor capacities, are shown to be the driving forces behind all other learning. ~ *Konrad, R.R., Empathy, Arts and Social Studies.*

In order to ensure that all of our students have the aforementioned benefits, sufficient funding is necessary to allow teachers to have the necessary materials to adequately instruct our students. As a music teacher, I never have enough instruments for all of my students, so we have to share. In some cases, I have to forgo certain music making opportunities, because there just are not enough instruments for all students. This is especially true if the class is large. The students themselves comment and lament the fact that they do not have enough equipment. Imagine how much beneficial their school learning could be if they had what they needed in the Arts, and other areas of school.

These students who have special needs are in desperate need for the additional funding it would take to help lower class sizes, hire more teachers and staff—including people who are certified to teach music, art, theater, everything that we know children need to develop into wonderful young women and men and productive citizens.

One of the founding and most hopeful principles of our nation is that, no matter your background, your poverty level, your disadvantage or disability, education is the great leveler—the bringer of equal opportunity for everyone. It is a shame that the wealthiest state in the nation has not yet figured out a way to help give our children from underprivileged backgrounds the extra resources they need so that they too can fulfill their God-given potential. I ask that the Kirwan Commission recommend not only that they find the extra \$2 million in state aid so as to help realize every Maryland's child's potential, but that the chunk of that extra funding go to students who are living in poverty, are English language learners, or eligible for Special Education. Surely, as the wealthiest state in the nation, we can afford the dream of equal opportunity through education. Thank you.

# The Baltimore Teachers Union

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Testimony of  
Mariette English, Baltimore Teachers Union and AFT-MD President  
Before the Commission on Excellence and Innovation in Education  
October 12, 2017

Dear Mr. Kirwan & Members of the Commission:

Thank you Mr. Chair and esteemed members of the Commission on Excellence and Innovation in Education. As the Commission transitions to drafting formal and concrete recommendations for the Legislature to consider, there are a number of elements various research teams have highlighted that we, AFT-MD and the Baltimore Teachers Union, think need further emphasis.

The Augenblick study shows that a significant increase in monetary resources is required for our public schools to fulfill their obligation of providing Maryland's children with a top rate education. They reached their conclusions by asking education professionals who are in the classrooms on a day-to-day basis what children and schools need to be successful--from being able to attract, retain and fairly compensate the best educational talent; to doing more to lower class sizes; offering more time for teacher planning and professional development; and assuring that every student has enough school supplies and materials in order to learn. This increase in public aid for Maryland's public schools is, as any Baltimore City teacher or paraprofessional can tell you, vital.

What troubles the BTU, and should trouble this Committee, are the findings by the National Center for Education and the Economy. They found that the current Maryland funding model falls *woefully* short when it comes to the issue of equity. For instance, NCEE found that the state spends about 5% less on poor school districts than wealthy ones. Once federal dollars are added, Maryland spends only 1.5% more per pupil on poor districts than wealthy ones. This ranks us 42<sup>nd</sup> in the nation, despite being first in wealth. The research teams suggested weights of .35 for students living in poverty and .35 for English Language Learners will not help us turn that ranking around. Any fair and equitable state funding formula should work to rectify this by implementing much larger weights for students living in poverty and English Language Learners than the Augenblick study recommends.

While multiple studies cited in the Augenblick report show the detrimental impact concentrated poverty has on a given student's educational outcomes, we refuse to accept the notion that nothing can be done to blunt the impact of concentrated poverty. All counties, or local education districts, are impacted at least somewhat by concentrations of poverty, but, in Baltimore City, the problem of concentrated poverty is the worst in the state. 91% of our schools have a FARMs rate of 60% or higher. No other county has that problem.

We urge the Commission to consider an escalating per-pupil multiplier for schools in which a pre-determined number of students are eligible for free or reduced meals. This escalated dollar amount can be used in a number of ways. BTU suggests hiring additional staff to decrease class sizes, and securing more specialists to offer services for these high-needs areas. We also know expanding Pre-K to include three and four-year-olds living in poverty can be a useful tool in overcoming poverty as a barrier to education early in a child's life. These funds can be used to expand summer school and after school programming.

Finally, we must build upon the successes of the community school strategy that has a proven record of helping to serve the needs of the whole child by providing wrap-around services for families and the communities where they live. We believe these successful strategies need to be part of compulsory educational funding, and should be a key component in your deliberations.

We must again draw attention to the NCEE points concerning student improvement correlating to the treatment of teachers and educators as professionals. Too often are educators blamed and punished for systemic issues beyond the scope of the classroom. The NCEE position that Maryland increase the prestige of the profession is something many of our members would applaud. Indeed, BTU has been calling for increasing partnerships with local colleges and universities in order to produce new teachers who are ready to take on the challenges of a Baltimore City classroom. We also have implemented many programs that fit with the idea of professional growth through more peer-to-peer mentorship. For years, BTU has provided opportunities for paraprofessionals to grow and remain in the system by making available the *Para-to-Teacher Program*. We have also developed a BTU Teacher-buddy system where new teachers are mentored by their more-experienced peers. Finally, we have been calling for years for more options for professional development, taking the incentive ourselves to create the BTU Professional Development Center where members can participate in a variety of training opportunities relevant to their content.

We in Baltimore City are uniquely aware of the challenges facing some of our state's students. Our members are highly-skilled and deeply -committed to educating each and every student, but we cannot, however, continue to blame teachers and schools for educational shortcomings where the state has not provided the needed resources equitably. By making the right recommendations to the legislature this Commission can take vital and important first steps to ensure that resources are not the reason some Maryland students fail to achieve. Thank you for your time.

# BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## **Testimony of Kamala Carnes, Principal, Claremont High School to the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education**

October 12, 2017

Good evening Chair Kirwan and members of the Commission. My name is Kamala Carnes and I serve as the Principal of Joseph C. Briscoe Academy in Baltimore City. As a longtime special educator, I thank you for the opportunity to share my unique perspective with you this evening.

At Joseph C. Briscoe Academy, we serve students with severe emotional disorders. With a combination of academic and vocational programming, special supports and an exceptional staff, our school helps students meet the challenges they face in and out of school and prepares them for a successful future.

While my current school focuses on students with intellectual challenges, my previous role as Principal of Claremont High – also in Baltimore City – allowed me the opportunity to serve adolescents and young adults with moderate to severe physical disabilities.

The range of disabilities at Claremont is vast and includes medically fragile students who are in need of 24 hour nursing care. We have students who are unable to move any body parts except for their head; they are often tube fed, on respirators and utilize other medical devices to survive. They learn to navigate their environment through the use of Assistive Technology in the form of joy sticks and switches, operated by moving their head. The other end of the spectrum finds students performing at a 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade level with some splinter skills even higher. Along with students with severe disabilities, we have students with Autism, psychiatric illness, mental illness, vision and hearing impaired and speech deficits. In short, students at Claremont have a need for a highly specialized program. This need has been with them from birth or at a very early age, and will be with them for the entirety of their lives.

Students attending schools like Joseph C. Briscoe and Claremont often have complex needs in areas such as communication, health care, behavior support, skill acquisition (e.g., academic, self-help, social, vocational), and generalization. They may experience sensory deficits and motor challenges, which require targeted intervention to support their participation in routines and activities. As such, these students typically require extensive services and support to enable them to access and progress in the general curriculum in the context of inclusive environments.

This need comes amidst a national shift in general education to make classroom learning more contextual so as to provide embedded opportunities for all students to learn and practice functional skills. However, students who attend schools like Joseph C. Briscoe



and Claremont cannot function in regular comprehensive programs, not even with the support of a Special Educator. As such, both Joseph C. Briscoe and Claremont are separate public day schools, two of six in the district that exclusively serve students with disabilities. Of course, students with special needs are also served in schools across the district, whether in dedicated programs housed within a traditional school or with special supports and accommodations in general education classrooms in both traditional and charter schools.

Not surprisingly, the level of service provided at Baltimore City's separate public day schools requires additional resources to ensure that students can be successful. These students require a much deeper level of support through related service providers such as speech therapists, ophthalmologists, audiologists, social workers, psychologists, behavioral teams, nursing staff, child study teams and more. These services are conducted throughout the day both directly and indirectly to see that the student can be as successful as possible. These specialized providers work closely with the families, teachers and the students offering their unique therapeutic service to insure that quality instruction happens.

It is no secret that my students cost far more to educate – in some cases as much as \$100,000 per year, which is nearly 20 times the per pupil average in a traditional school. Indeed, for a large portion of Baltimore's special education students, the cost of the services they require far exceeds any average per-pupil figure. As such, it is imperative that the Commission carefully consider the needs of *all* students when determining how best to update the state's education funding formula. Without a formula that adequately reflects the cost to serve the types of students to whom I've dedicated my career, Maryland will run the risk of jeopardizing services to all students as general education funds will undoubtedly have to be pulled to offset the cost of special education.

Thank you for your consideration.

## KIRWAN TESTIMONY, OCT. 12<sup>TH</sup>

To Dr. Kirwan and the rest of the Commission, greetings and thank you for hearing our testimony today. My name is Tolu Sosanya and I am a current Baltimore City resident and former Baltimore City Public School teacher. I taught as a special education resource teacher for grades 2-4 and general education teacher for grades 1, 2, 4 and 5.

During my teaching experience, I served students who were eager to learn and desired community and camaraderie with their peers. However, sometimes learning and building community were difficult to achieve in the classroom. Because of the weight of a student's experience outside of the classroom, including having personal needs go unmet, it was difficult for some students to focus on learning. In my 2<sup>nd</sup> grade class, I had one student who received mental health services outside of school, but often came to school anxious. She tore up papers, threw them on the floor, wrote in books, frequently walked out of the classroom and initiated conflicts with other students. Even after multiple sessions with the school social worker, pairing her with a mentor, offering special incentives and extending a referral to the parent for a different out of school counseling service, this child did not master self-regulation to optimize classroom time.

Another one of my second graders, who had grown up in foster care, struggled with anger management, and for corrections such as "don't cut in line," would go on a rampage and destroy classroom property or hallway displays. In the presentation given by Dr. Paul Reville, Harvard Graduate School of Education professor, at the Commission's July 26<sup>th</sup> meeting in Annapolis, he mentioned that schools alone cannot close gaps for students of poverty. He mentioned the need for the integration of mental health services within schools, alongside of personalized learning and quality enrichment. To echo that presentation, please hear today that poverty matters! **Ninety-six percent of schools in Baltimore City are designated as having populations of concentrated poverty.** But poverty is not just a Baltimore issue, 58% of all Maryland schools serve a population of concentrated poverty.

In Dr. Reville's presentation, he mentioned that low income students need 3 teachers compared to the 1 teacher for non-low income students, in order to achieve the same results.

As you consider equity in deriving a new funding formula, please consider the cost of supplying schools with high concentrations of poverty with more qualified personnel to meet the academic, social and emotional needs of students.

Thank you.





**Patterson Park Public**  
CHARTER SCHOOL

## **Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education**

**Public Hearing Testimony - October 12, 2017**

**John Wesby, vice president of the board and**

**PPPCS parent of three**

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the important work undertaken by the Commission. Our school community applauds the Commission's effort to assure that Maryland has a world-class education system that serves every child well with no dead-ends.

Patterson Park Public Charter School (PPPCS) is its 12th year of operation in Southeast Baltimore and serves over 700 City public school children from preK through 8th grade. Most are economically disadvantaged, and the school serves meals to children year-round, as well as offering dental services and other family supports. PPPCS has a higher rate of non-native English speakers than most City schools at 16.4%, 16.1% of students are in special education, and the school is diverse, with a population 50% African American, 33% Hispanic, and 15% white. As you know, PPPCS is one of the schools highlighted in the APA Adequacy Study for its success with student groups. We know it takes great teaching and sufficient funding to provide equity and access and to have all students succeed. To assure that disadvantaged students across the City and State can be served well, we ask that the Commission recommend adequate State funding to Baltimore City and additional per pupil funding for students with high needs and those in poverty.

PPPCS scores high on climate surveys and has an attendance rate over 95%. Student turnover generally averages 7%, tens of percentage points below the City average. PPPCS had zero teacher turnover two years ago and just two changes this year, both for reasons unrelated to the school. These statistics reflect the school community's commitment to valuing the individuals who constitute it. The school values families' contributions and provides children and families with the strong supports they need. Teachers are partners with school leadership in developing and implementing curriculum, and the school provides professional pathways, partnering with local universities to place interns, hire some, and then develop teacher leaders. A paraprofessional has become a teacher, teachers have become master teachers and administrators; assistant principals have gone on to lead other schools. PPPCS teachers have room to innovate: for example, one of our kindergarten teachers created a curriculum around animal care that helps prevent child abuse and with an SPCA partnership has replicated the curriculum in dozens of schools. The community raises funds so that students leave the PPPCS middle school having had an international experience. And our robotics team has city trophies and hopes this year to make its third consecutive trip to the world robotics competition.

Charter schools educate 20,000 Maryland students and 13,000 in Baltimore. Half of the City's top 20 schools are charters. Last year, PPPCS received 550 lottery applications for the 96 available seats. Citywide, 48% of families who seek a charter and are left on a waitlist leave the city public school system. Families clearly see charters as part of the way forward for Maryland public schools. To assure that the many students in charter schools receive predictable funding at a level commensurate with other public school children, and thus to facilitate even stronger partnerships across all public schools, we ask the Commission to recommend that the State codify the State Board of Education's recommended funding formula for public charter schools, limiting fees to the current 2% and prohibiting charges beyond that, and also creating a separate per-pupil allotment to public charters for facilities. PPPCS pays City schools \$600,000 for facilities to which it has no access.

Last year, 85% of PPPCS students qualified for criteria-based high schools in the City; another 11% went to private high schools. But the true test of our success will be how our graduates fare in college, in the workforce, and in their communities. One of the first students to attend PPPCS for all K-8 years was last year's junior class vice president at the University of Maryland, College Park. That's the kind of burgeoning leadership, both academic and civic, that we hope to cultivate in our young people, in partnership with their families and communities.

410.558.1230

27 N. Lakewood Ave  
Baltimore, MD 21224

[www.pppcs.org](http://www.pppcs.org)

# Patterson Park Public Charter School

Patterson Park Public Charter School is a city-wide, public charter school serving over 700 students in grades Pre K - 8th. Our students are whole people influenced & inspired by their surroundings. Decisions made at the district, city, & state level affect our programming & therefore our students ability to succeed.

## Ask one...

Every student in Baltimore City Public Schools has the resources needed to learn & achieve at a high level

## Ask two...

Adequacy & equity must extend to the students served by charter schools



**Patterson Park Public**  
CHARTER SCHOOL



## **Patterson Park Public Charter School requests that the Kirwan Commission ensures...**

**Every student in  
Baltimore City Public  
Schools has the resources  
needed to learn &  
achieve at a high level**

We request that the state  
allocate sufficient & additional  
per pupil funding for:

- High-need students
- Students in poverty
- Schools with a high concentration of students living in poverty



**Adequacy & equity  
extend to the  
students served by  
charter schools in  
Baltimore**

We request the  
Commission support innovation  
in education by:

- Codifying the State Board of Education's recommended funding formula
- Prohibiting Districts from requiring fees or buy-backs of service beyond the 2% administrative fees
- Giving equitable access to state facility funding & creating a per pupil facilities allocation



## Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education

Public Hearing Testimony - October 12, 2017

Melissa Riccobono, PPPCS parent of three

My name is Melissa Riccobono. I am the parent of three children who attend Patterson Park Public Charter School. My son is a fifth grader this year, and my daughters are in second grade and kindergarten. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you this evening.

My husband, Mark, and I are strong supporters of public education. I am a school counselor by training, and worked in Baltimore County Public Schools. Mark directed an agency which oversaw all services for blind children in Wisconsin, and now, as president of the National Federation of the Blind, he works every day to make sure all blind children have equal access to a high quality education.

For Mark and me, and for many other families in Baltimore City, the existence of public charter schools allowed us to remain in the city in which Mark works, and still give our children a high quality public education. Our son is an advanced learner. It was crucial for us to find a school where he could excel as a child who was reading before he entered kindergarten. Both of our daughters are blind. We are so fortunate to have a school where their unique learning needs are met alongside their sighted peers.

Patterson Park Public Charter School has provided my children with fantastic teachers who truly care about their students and appreciate all of their talents, encourage their creativity, and use their differences as a way to help all other students learn about and appreciate diversity. My husband and I are truly valued as members of our daughters' IEP teams; our knowledge and input are taken into account when writing goals and providing training to staff. I have sat at many IEP tables, and, unfortunately, this is not always the case.

For our family, private school would be a very difficult option. Of course the cost would be a factor, as it would for any family, but private schools often do not have the structure in place to support students who qualify for special education. Because of Patterson Park Public Charter School, our daughters are able to receive the free, appropriate, public education to which they are entitled, while still allowing my husband and me to have them attend a school where we feel sure the quality of instruction is high, the curriculum is whole child focused, and where we are valued as members of the school community.

Patterson Park Public Charter School strives to provide all students with a world class whole child education. It is a place where accountability to meet state and district educational standards is high; without demonstration of meeting these standards, our charter will be revoked. Patterson Park Public Charter School is a place of innovation. It is a school Baltimore City should be proud of. I urge this commission to recognize public charter schools as vehicles of family choice and places where excellent instruction and innovation occur daily. Please recommend a funding formula which is consistent and fair for all Maryland public schools, including public charter schools. Thank you.



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**Patterson Park Public**  
CHARTER SCHOOL

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**From:**  
**To:** [Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education](#)  
**Subject:** Written testimony for tonight  
**Date:** Thursday, October 12, 2017 5:01:53 AM

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Good morning,

My name is Corey Gaber and I'm signed up for public comment tonight. Though I won't have enough time to read all of my thoughts, the summary I'll present is based on the full version that you can find here. <https://medium.com/@cbgaber/anchored-to-injustice-public-school-funding-historical-amnesia-and-our-imaginative-failures-8f00c2531bac>

If you need a word document version I can provide that as well, thanks!

Corey



# Anchored to Injustice: Public School Funding, Historical Amnesia, and our Imaginative Failures.

Without thinking for more than 3 seconds, estimate this product:

$$8 \times 7 \times 6 \times 5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1$$

Now estimate the product below, in less than 3 seconds.

$$1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5 \times 6 \times 7 \times 8$$

When researchers asked one group of high school students the first math question, and another group the second, the median answer was different by a factor of four (2,250 vs. 512), even though the answers are the same (40,320). Why? Since **8** was the starting point in the first sequence, it resulted in higher estimates than the exact same product with **1** as the sequence's starting point.

Our brains are beholden to something called the anchoring effect, a cognitive bias that describes the human tendency to rely too heavily on the first piece of information offered (the “anchor”) when making decisions.

Sports agent extraordinaire Scott Boras uses this Jedi mind trick to full effect. When a player he represents enters free agency or is negotiating a new contract, the initial asking price he throws out is usually absurd and everyone knows it. In 2007 Boras told the New York Yankees he would not come to the table for less than 10 years and 350 million dollars for superstar Alex Rodriguez (the Yankees wanted to offer a 5-year, 150-million-dollar contract extension). The media scoffed at his over-the-top ask, but people kept talking about it. *350 million* soon became the anchor by which we compared all offers. Rodriguez eventually signed a record setting, 10-year, 275 million dollar deal far beyond what the market and pundits predicted. The

“compromise” that was reached could feel like a win for the Evil Empire because of how much lower it was than the initial ask. The Yankees weren’t dumb, just human. Even when we know anchoring is in play, we can’t stop from organizing our thoughts around it.

Anchoring is a tool used in politics as well. Baltimore City Public Schools CEO Sonia Santelises proactively anchored our conversation about BCPSS school funding with a thorough and effective public narrative. In it, she painted a bleak picture: decreased enrollment, rising teacher salary/benefit costs, mandated 21st century building and Pre-K funding all added up to a 130-million-dollar deficit which could lead to 1,000 layoffs over the summer. After weeks of letter writing, demonstrating, and advocating at the state house by community members, Annapolis leaders and the Mayor agreed on a \$180 million funding package spread over the next 3 years.

Sixty million dollars for 2017! WHOA! Relative to the anchor of cutting 130 million from next year’s budget, this is a cause for celebration.

Or is it?

Let’s look at the same event, through a different lens. Let’s reset our anchor to one that acknowledges recent historical context, the state constitution, and the economic, political, and moral decisions and policy making of the past two decades. Instead of focusing on a single year deficit, let’s consider the sum of the deficits incurred over time, or what scholar Gloria Ladson Billings calls our “education debt.”(1)

The state has repeatedly and consistently underfunded Baltimore City Public Schools in violation of their own constitutional definition of adequacy, upheld by the courts multiple times.(2)

## Article VIII

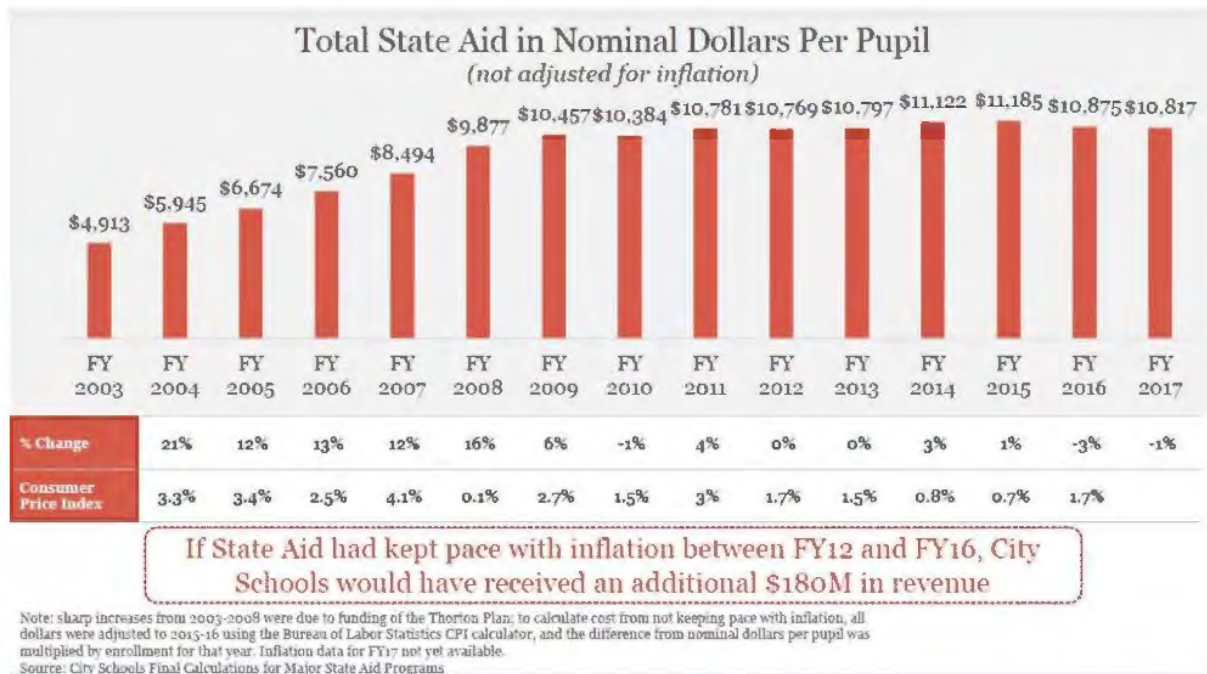
## Education

## Section 1.

The General Assembly, at its First Session after the adoption of this Constitution, shall by Law establish throughout the State a thorough and efficient System of Free Public Schools; and shall provide by taxation, or otherwise, for their maintenance.

In 1996, Maryland Circuit Court Judge Joseph Kaplan found in *Bradford vs. MD State Board of Education* that “the public school children in Baltimore City are not being provided with an education that is adequate when measured by contemporary educational standards.” *The Bradford* plaintiffs and the State entered into a consent decree under which the State agreed to “provide a meaningful and timely remedy...to meet the best interests of the school children of Baltimore City.” The short-term funding fix agreed to (among other reforms) an infusion of funding for the following 4 years, and an opportunity to ask for further funding in 1999.

The school system submitted a plan explaining its need for an additional \$260 m./year, a figure affirmed by both Judge Kaplan and the consulting firm Metis (picked by the state itself) to be an “adequate” per pupil expenditure. In 2002 based on the Thornton Commission’s study, a new education formula became law- one which was slated to deliver the \$260 m. to Baltimore (along with over \$1 billion to other school districts) over the next six years. The slow ramp-up of funding and a City Schools budget crisis led the court in 2004 to reaffirm the continued underfunding, and deliver a memorandum opinion stating that the “constitutional violation” was still in effect.

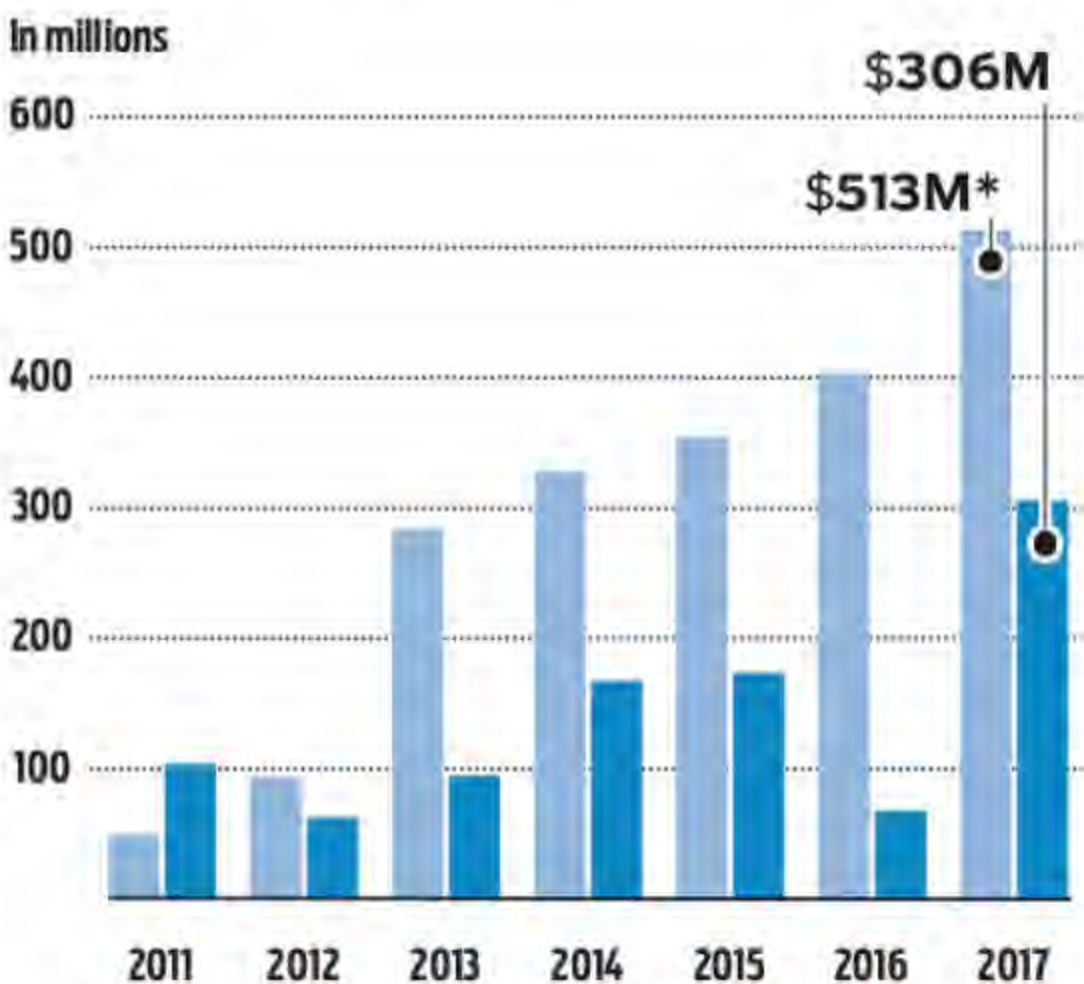


Between 2004–2008, funding was increased to meet adequacy requirements *gradually* rather than immediately. Furthermore, from 2009–2016 the state changed the per-pupil spending amount for inflation, in some years allowing no inflation increase at all, and did not consistently fund the Geographic Cost of Index element, further adding to the education debt.

Finally, between 2010–2017 the casino revenue put into the education trust fund did not match the actual budget increases for K-12 education.

REVENUE FROM CASINOS FOR EDUCATION TRUST FUND (Total: \$1.7B)

BUDGET INCREASES FOR K-12 EDUCATION (Total: \$979M)



Summarized below:

**1996–2000** = \$1,300,000,000 (Less than the Metis firm per pupil number)(3)

**2001–2004** = \$834,000,000 (Less than what the Thornton formula required)(4)

**2004–2008** = Unknown (Gap from gradual rise instead of jumping right to adequacy)(5)

**2009–2016** = \$1,000,000,000 (Gap from not fully funding the Thornton formula)(6)

**2010–2017** = Unknown (Casino revenue that didn't make it to schools)(7)

When adding up this gross underfunding of BCPSS, which is nothing short of the crime of theft being committed against the predominantly Black youth who attend these schools, we reach a very rough education debt to Baltimore City of **3.2 BILLION DOLLARS!**

Let's remember that this astronomical number doesn't even represent what *excellent* funding for our kids would look like. After all, Maryland's private schools, that serve the wealthy and well-off children of the elite charge \$25–40,000 a year!(8) We're just talking about *adequate* funding, and we fall grotesquely short of even achieving that.

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ABOUT

ADMISSIONS

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Tuition

Financial Aid

2017/18

Lower School	\$40,840 (includes hot lunch and textbooks)
Middle and Upper Schools	\$40,840 (includes hot lunch)

ADDITIONAL ANNUAL FEES

Middle School textbooks and laptop fee (grades 5–8)	\$560
Upper School textbooks	\$500–\$700
Daily shuttle bus transportation between DC and Bethesda campuses (optional)	\$925 one way, \$1,425 round trip
Lower School Early Risers (optional)	\$225–\$1,000
Lower School After Care (optional) 1–5 days per week	\$1,500–\$5,800

So is HB 684's infusion of money really worthy of celebration? If our starting point—our anchor—is determined by simply following the law, then the end result of HB 684 is that BCPSS is receiving an additional cut *beyond*

the inadequate and unconstitutionally low status quo of today, never mind the accumulated debt of the past 2 decades.

Imagine how much more our students could have accomplished with smaller class sizes, wrap around services, the arts, and enrichment opportunities that 3.2 billion would have allowed. How many more students would have stayed in school instead of dropping out? How much more stability would our buildings have if teachers weren't overwhelmed and under-resourced, leading to a regular exodus of veteran educators? How many more families would stay in the city if they could send their kids to a well-resourced local public school?

These questions haven't been considered because the anchoring effect creates a gravitational pull on our minds towards past narratives and actions. Tragically in Baltimore that means a history of injustice and false claims of poverty whenever the government has to equitably fund black children's education. It has even our best advocates accept an ahistorical framing, focusing on one year deficits and blaming red herrings rather than addressing the real issue.

Inadequate education for poor people and black people is a practice that goes back to the founding of our country. African Americans were forbidden an education during the period of enslavement. After emancipation, freedmen's schools existed, but their purpose was the maintenance of a servant class. During our long period of legal apartheid, African Americans attended schools whose only materials were the old cast-offs from White schools. In areas in need of farm labor the typical school year was only four months long. Black students in the south did not experience universal secondary schooling until 1968. (9)

If the imaginations of our current leaders lack the strength to escape the gravitational pull of the anchoring effect, then we need to re-set their anchors, first by re-setting our own. Let's repeat to ourselves over and over again that this current crisis has been manufactured over decades by the illicit failures and racist policies of our national and local governments, and is only the



most recent iteration of our failure to live up to our country's ideals of democracy and equity.

Let's remember that 130 million dollars is nothing compared to the 3.2 billion dollars that we can prove is owed to the district (let alone monies owed due to previous underfunding). Let's address once and for all the legally required adequate annual funding and historical education debt.

## **ENDNOTES:**

(1) Ladson-Billings, Gloria. "From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in US schools." *Educational researcher* 35.7 (2006): 3–12.

(2) <http://caselaw.findlaw.com/md-court-of-appeals/1089081.html>

(3) 1996–2000: In 2000 Metis number says we need 260 million more per year,  $260 \times 5 = 1.3$  billion

(4) 2001–2004: 834.7 million comes from the 2004 memorandum opinion, assuming a 2,600 per pupil number. "(7) for FY 2001 through 2004, the State underfunded BCPS by \$439.4 million to \$834.7 million (depending on whether \$2,000 or \$2,600 was used);"

(5) 2005–2008: According to the fiscal note that accompanied the Thornton Bill, "State aid to the local school systems would increase by nearly \$148 million in FY 2004, \$364 million in FY 2005, \$639 million in FY 2006, \$948 million in FY 2007, and \$1.3 billion in FY 2008. For the six-year phase-in period, Baltimore City would receive \$375.2 million more than it received in FY 2002, an increase of 64%." Since we don't know exactly what Baltimore would have received had they not phased in gradually, I didn't include the difference in my final 3.2 billion number.

(6) 2008–2015: We do know the adequacy gaps in 2011 and 2015 because DLS ran the numbers (70 million and 290 million respectively). There were

many complicating factors that make the total gap between 2008–2015 difficult to precisely calculate, as DLS did not do those calculations for the other years. However, for the sake of finding a rough number, we can assume an average growth between the benchmarks to get the following:

a. FY08- \$17.5 (in millions)

09- \$35

10- \$52.5

**11- \$70**

12- \$125

13- \$180

14- \$235

**15- \$290**

Total: \$1,005,000,000

(7) The difference between education trust fund inputs from casino revenue and actual increase in MD K-12 spending between 2009–2017 was 721 million according to <http://www.baltimoresun.com/bal-casino-revenues-not-reflected-in-school-funding-20170120-htmlstory.html> (This was also not included in the 3.2 billion number since it's difficult to know how much of that total number would have ended up at BCPSS)

(8) A sampling of local private schools.

a. Jemicy [https://bbk12e1-cdn.myschoolcdn.com/ftpimages/957/misc/misc\\_178085.pdf](https://bbk12e1-cdn.myschoolcdn.com/ftpimages/957/misc/misc_178085.pdf)

b. Gilman <https://www.gilman.edu/admissions/tuition>

c. Sidwell Friends <http://www.sidwell.edu/admissions/tuition-and-fees/index.aspx?Referer=https%253a%252f%252fwww.sidwell.edu%252f>

(9) Anderson, James D. *Historical perspectives on Black academic achievement*. 2002.