

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

**Witness Sign-up sheet**

**Date of Hearing: October 25, 2017**

**Location: Largo High School, Upper Marlboro, Maryland**

	NAME	ADDRESS & PHONE NUMBER	NAME OF ORGANIZATION (IF APPLICABLE)	WRITTEN TESTIMONY	
				YES	NO
1	Dr. Kevin Maxwell				
2	Theresa Dudley		Prince George's County Educators Association	✓	
3	Michael J. Wilson		Maryland Hunger Solutions	✓	
4	Daniel D. Curry		Superintendent Calvert County Public Schools	✓	
5	Sally Nazelrod		MAHPERD (Maryland Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance)	✓	
6	Michael Raup		Self	✓	
7	Sarah Coulter		City Neighbors High School employee		
8	Jennifer King Rice		USM MICUA Deans and Directors Council	✓	

	NAME	ADDRESS & PHONE NUMBER	NAME OF ORGANIZATION (IF APPLICABLE)	WRITTEN TESTIMONY	
				YES	NO
9	Jerome Dancis, Ph.D.		Associate Professor Emeritus Department of Mathematics, University of Maryland, College Park,	✓	
10	Lisa VanBuskirk		Start School Later, Maryland & Anne Arundel County Chapter Leader	✓	
11	Yvonne Golczewski		Maryland Coalition for Gifted and Talented Education (MCGATE)	✓	
12	Jes Ellis		Parent and teacher in the Prince George's County public school system; policy fellow with Teach Plus Maryland		
13	Jill Warzer		Speaking on behalf of herself as a school specialist		
14	Paul Geller		Self	✓	
15	Alice Cain		Parent of two students in Maryland Public Schools and also a Commissioner on the Annapolis Education Commission in Anne Arundel County		
16	Sheena Washington		Self	✓	
17	Jodi Bortz		Support Our Schools	✓	
18	Diana Mitchell		Dorchester County Public Schools	✓	

	NAME	ADDRESS & PHONE NUMBER	NAME OF ORGANIZATION (IF APPLICABLE)	WRITTEN TESTIMONY	
				YES	NO
19	Melissa McKenna		Self		
20	Neal J. Orringer		Vice President, Advocacy Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations		
21	Dayana Bergman		Parent of student in Baltimore County schools		
22	Krishanti Vignarajah		Candidate for Governor of Maryland		
23	Jonathan Roland		Public school teacher and a parent of a public school student		
24	Sheldon Fishman		Self		
25	Samir Paul		Public school alumnus, teacher, and PTA activist		
26	Amity Pope		Self		
27	Denny Gulick		Professor at the University of Maryland	✓	
28	Tom Dillon		Literacy Lab	✓	
29	Pamela Bukowski		Teachers Association of Anne Arundel County and the Maryland State Education Association		
30	Catherine Carter		Visual Impairment Advocate	✓	

	NAME	ADDRESS & PHONE NUMBER	NAME OF ORGANIZATION (IF APPLICABLE)	WRITTEN TESTIMONY	
				YES	NO
31	Michele Clark		First Grade Teacher at William Paca Elementary; PGCEA Board of Directors		
32	<a href="#">Adeline Wilcox</a>		Self	✓	
33					
34	Segun Eubanks		Chair, Board of Education, PGCPS		
35	Shayla Adams–Stafford		Concerned resident from Prince George’s County and career education		
36	Jennifer Iverson		Executive Director, Prince George’s Child Resource Center		
37	Toni Baptiste		Director, Body Moves (a licensed before and after school child care program)		
38	Rachel Man		Teacher, Prince George’s Co. Alumnus, Teach Plus		
39	<a href="#">Monique Klaus Bourque</a>		Maryland Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition	✓	
40	Brunilda Amarills Lugo de Fabritz		School Sargent, Shriver Elementary School and Northwood High School, Montgomery County		
41	Mbulwa Musyoki		Teach Plus Teacher Advocacy and special educator at a Title 1 school in Prince George’s County		

	NAME	ADDRESS & PHONE NUMBER	NAME OF ORGANIZATION (IF APPLICABLE)	WRITTEN TESTIMONY	
				YES	NO
42	Darwin Romera		Montgomery County Council Of PTAs	✓	
43	Lee Reed		Closing the Gap Coalition of Calvert County (Part of Strong Schools Maryland)		
44	Geraldine Hall		Representing her child and the Dora Kennedy French Immersion PTA members	✓	
45	Spear Lancaster		Chesapeake Lighthouse Foundation		
46	Linda McLaughlin		Education Association of Charles County and MSEA		
47	Ryan Curry		Prince George's County Educators' Association and MSEA		
48	Allison Heintz		Teachers Association of Anne Arundel County and MSEA		
49	Nancy Crosby		Calvert Education Association and MSEA		
50	Betty Goldstein		Calvert Education Association and MSEA		
51	Michelle Clarke		Prince George's County Educators' Association and MSEA		
52	Theresa Dudley		Prince George's County Educators' Association and MSEA		
53	Carina McDaniel		Calvert Education Association and MSEA		

	NAME	ADDRESS & PHONE NUMBER	NAME OF ORGANIZATION (IF APPLICABLE)	WRITTEN TESTIMONY	
				YES	NO
54	Beth Roe		Calvert Education Association and MSEA		
55	Annett Jones		Prince George's County Educators' Association and as a teacher		
56	Tommi Makila		Self		
57	Flora Gee		Member, Maryland State Child Care Association and as a Director that has operated a Prince George's County Public Pre-K program for 17 years at her center in Greenbelt		
58	Jeanne B. Saum		Decoding Dyslexia of Maryland		
59	Victoria Calhoun		President, Jessup Elementary School PTA	✓	
60	Elizabeth Jones		Active member of her teacher's union, MCEA, and proud parent of Baltimore County Public School children in an underfunded school (Reisterstown Elem.)		
61	Ingrid Villelda		To support the Overlook Full Spanish Immersion School		



Wednesday, October 25, 2017

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

Dr. Kirwan and Commission Members;

The Prince George's County Educators' Association (PGCEA) represents approximately 10,500 members in our County Schools. We service over to 130, 000 students in Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS). Last year 63% or 83,000 of our children received free or reduced lunch.<sup>i</sup> While many members of our County live in affluence, many of our most vulnerable children live in poverty. Our mission is to "Advocate for our members and for a quality equitable education for the children we serve." It is in this light of our great needs, I humbly submit our testimony to the commission.

PGCEA has been monitoring your work as a commission and we are very cognizant of your Maryland State Constitutional responsibility to develop equitable recommendations for funding Maryland Schools. Prince George's County did receive great gains in funding through the Thornton Commission recommendations. Our school system budget for 2018 year was \$2.03 billion dollars. Even with this great investment, our schools are underfunded by over \$552 million dollars.

We are asking that you take into account the impact underfunding has on our district. Our members are overworked and undervalued, and they are overwhelmed by non-academic barriers to student success, namely poverty. This past year we had an approximately 15% turnover in instructional staff. Due to the inequitable funding we are losing educators to surrounding jurisdictions. Poverty brings barriers to student achievement. We desire to serve all of our students, and we know firsthand that there are students that will succeed because of us and those that will succeed in spite of us. Low pay and assisting our students at hard to staff schools is overwhelming and increases teacher turnover. Our ask is that you focus on assisting us in meaningful improvements to the formulas that address the needs of our high concentrations of poverty in our county.

One improvement we are recommending is the establishment of a formula that aligns with the best practices of Community Schools.<sup>ii</sup> A Community School is at the center of the community – open all day, every day, to everyone – that brings together academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement under one roof, leading to improved learning, stronger families, and healthier communities.



**The Six Pillars are:**

**Strong and Proven Curriculum**

Educators provide a rich and varied academic program allowing students to acquire both foundational and advanced knowledge and skills in many content areas. Students learn with challenging, culturally relevant materials that address their learning needs and expand their experience. They also learn how to analyze and understand the unique experiences and perspectives of others. The curriculum embraces all content areas including the arts, second languages, and physical education. Rigorous courses such as Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate are offered. Learning and enrichment activities are provided before and after the regular school day, including sports, the arts, and homework assistance. The needs of parents and families are addressed through English-as-a-Second Language classes, GED preparation, and job training programs.

**High-quality teaching**

Teachers are fully licensed, knowledgeable about their content, and skillful in their practice. Instructional time focuses on learning rather than testing. Individual student needs are identified and learning opportunities are designed to address them. Higher order thinking skills are at the core of instruction so that all students acquire problem solving, critical thinking, and reasoning skills. Educators work collaboratively to plan lessons, analyze student work, and adjust curriculum as required. Experienced educators work closely with novices as mentors, coaches, and “guides on the side,” sharing their knowledge and expertise. Together, educators identify the methods and approaches that work and change those that are not meeting student needs.

**Inclusive leadership** – Leadership Teams with educators, the Community School Coordinator, and other school staff share the responsibility of school operations with the principal. This Leadership Team ensures that the community school strategy remains central in the decision-making process. The team plans development and implementation that includes thinking about sustainability that involves not just fund-raising but also organizing resources in new and more effective ways. A Community School Committee inclusive of families, community partners, school staff, youth, and other stakeholders from the school’s various constituencies works in collaboration with the Leadership Team.





**Positive Behavior Practices**

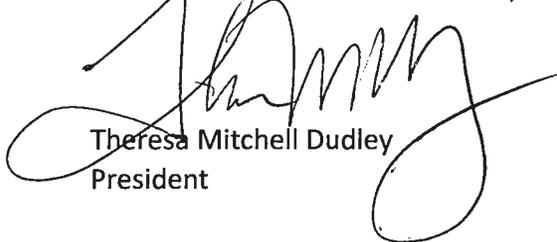
Community school educators emphasize positive relationships and interactions, and model these through their own behavior. Negative behaviors and truancy are acknowledged and addressed in ways that hold students accountable while showing them they are still valued members of the school community. Restorative discipline practices such as peer mediation, community service and post-conflict resolution help students learn from their mistakes and foster positive, healthy school climates where respect and compassion are core principles. Zero-tolerance practices leading to suspension and expulsion are avoided.

**Family and Community Partnerships** – Families, caregivers and community members are partners in creating dynamic, flexible community schools. Their engagement is not related to a specific project or program, but is on-going and extends beyond volunteerism to roles in decision-making, governance and advocacy. Their voices are critical to articulating and achieving the school’s overall mission and goals. When families and educators work together, students are more engaged learners who earn higher grades and enroll in more challenging classes; student attendance and grade and school completion rates improve.

**Community Support Services** – Community school educators recognize that students often come to school with challenges that impact their ability to learn, explore, and develop in the classroom. Because learning does not happen in isolation, community schools provide meals, health care, mental-health counseling, and other services before, during, and after school. These wraparound services are integrated into the fabric of the school that follows the Whole Child tenets. Connections to the community are critically important so support services and referrals are available for families and other community members.

We know the formula has not kept up with our changing student body and increased poverty, with growing state and federal mandates. Our system is laden with the responsibilities of Special Education mandates as well. It is imperative to the success of the children in Prince George’s County that your work supports the professionals charged with one of the most important constitutional obligations in this state, that of providing a “thorough and efficient system of free public schools.”

Thank You for Your Consideration,



Theresa Mitchell Dudley  
President

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.reportcard.msde.maryland.gov> Maryland State Department of Education Report Card

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.nea.org/communityschools> National Education Association. Community Schools Toolkit

# Testimony to the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education

## The Connection Between Adequate Nutrition and Education Outcomes

Good evening, my name is Michael J. Wilson and I am the Director of Maryland Hunger Solutions, a statewide non-profit, non-partisan organization that works across Maryland using three key strategies to reduce hunger. First, we provide education about hunger and food insecurity and what works to reduce it. Secondly, we work to ensure that all those who are eligible for nutrition programs such as food stamps and school meals are enrolled and benefiting from this assistance. Third, we advocate for improved public policies to better reduce hunger and food insecurity in Maryland. This third strategy brings me here tonight to discuss the connection between adequate nutrition and education outcomes.

The research is clear - students who eat breakfast at school:

- perform better on standardized tests;<sup>1</sup>
- show improved school attendance;<sup>2,3</sup> and
- have improved concentration, alertness, comprehension, and memory.<sup>4,5,6</sup>

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation recommends school breakfast programs as an effective strategy that improves cognitive function, increases academic achievement, and decreases disparities.<sup>7</sup> Despite these proven connections, school meals remain largely separate from discussions regarding education funding – and this is unfortunate.

I am here to urge you to recognize that hungry students cannot learn – regardless of the quality and experience of their teachers or the amount of funding allocated to their school from the state.

You may be thinking, don't we already have free and reduced-price school meals for students in need? Maryland has made strides in increasing access to school breakfast and lunch programs, yet the school breakfast program still reaches less than half of all low-income students.

We know that to fix this problem, we need to address the three primary barriers to participation in school meal programs: cost, timing, and stigma. I urge your support for three proven solutions to mitigate these barriers: first, Maryland Meals for Achievement, state funding for breakfast in the classroom; second, expanding eligibility for free meals to all low-income students; and third, community eligibility, which is federal funding that creates Hunger-Free Schools.

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<sup>1</sup> Vaisman N, Voet H, Akivis A, Vakil E. (1996) "Effects of Breakfast Timing on the Cognitive Functions of Elementary School Students." Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, 150:1089-1092.

<sup>2</sup> Murphy JM, Pagano M, Nachmani J, Sperling P, Kane S, Kleinman R. (1998) "The Relationship of School Breakfast to Psychosocial and Academic Functioning." Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, 152:899-907

<sup>3</sup> Powell CA, Walker SP, Chang SM, Grantham-McGregor SM. (1998) "Nutrition and education: a randomized trial of the effects of breakfast in rural primary school children." American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 68:873-9

<sup>4</sup> Grantham-McGregor S, Chang S, Walker S. (1998) "Evaluation of School Feeding Programs: Some Jamaican Examples." American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 67(4) 785S-789S

<sup>5</sup> Brown JL, Beardslee WH, Prothrow-Stith D. (2008) "Impact of School Breakfast on Children's Health and Learning." Sodexo Foundation

<sup>6</sup> Morris CT, Courtney A, Bryant CA, McDermott RJ. (2010) "Grab 'N' Go Breakfast at School: Observation from a Pilot Program." Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior, 42(3): 208-209

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/policies/school-breakfast-programs>

First, Maryland Meals for Achievement is a successful strategy to ensure that students start the school day ready to learn. First piloted nearly twenty years ago, students in 447 schools currently benefit from this state funding for universal breakfast in the classroom. A Harvard Medical School study (2001) found that students at MMFA schools showed improved Maryland test scores and increased attention spans. In addition, they were less likely to have behavioral problems in the classroom, be tardy to school, and visit the school nurse for headaches and hunger pains. Unfortunately, the program is underfunded and therefore only about half of all eligible high-poverty schools can participate. We urge the members of the Commission to support full funding for Maryland Meals for Achievement in the Governor's budget and/or by including this funding in the larger Kirwan Commission bill.

Maryland Meals for Achievement works because it removes all three of the barriers to participation in school breakfast: cost, timing, and stigma. The second successful strategy that I will discuss removes the "cost" barrier by expanding eligibility for free meals to all low-income students.

Currently, students in most schools are categorized into three groups (free, reduced-price, or paid) based on their household income. While about half of all students in Maryland are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, many low-income students do not qualify for free school meals. For instance, did you know that a single parent with one child and an annual income of just \$22,000 does not qualify for free meals at school? The income guidelines for school meals are set at the federal level and clearly they are not adequate considering the cost of living in our state.

Other states have expanded access to free meals to all low-income students by eliminating the reduced-price school meal co-pays. This measure, requiring \$3.3 million annually, would support students in families that are struggling to get by on low wages. For these 45,000 reduced-price eligible students, finding money for school lunch each day is a real barrier. We urge the Commission to support this effort by including funding to eliminate reduced-price school meal fees in the larger Kirwan Commission bill and/or in The Maryland Cares for Kids Act of 2018.

The final successful strategy that I will discuss is the community eligibility – federal funding that creates Hunger-Free Schools. In 242 Maryland schools, the Community Eligibility Provision allows all students to have access to school breakfast and lunch at no cost. This school year, more than 103,500 students in our state attend a Hunger-Free School. However, the utilization of community eligibility will sharply decline if the Commission requires these schools to collect and process an alternative income form for determining state compensatory education funding.

Thank you for your consideration and support for Maryland Meals for Achievement, state funding for breakfast in the classroom; state funding to expand eligibility for free meals to all low-income students; and finally for community eligibility, the federal option that creates Hunger-Free Schools.

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For more information on the connection between school meals and educational performance, we recommend the research summary, “*Breakfast for Learning*” (<http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/breakfastforlearning-1.pdf>) and “[Healthier students are better learners: A missing link in school reforms to close the achievement gap.](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21923870)” (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21923870>) which asserts that “*no matter how well teachers are prepared to teach, no matter what accountability measures are put in place, no matter what governing structures are established for schools, educational progress will be profoundly limited if students are not... able to learn.*”



**Calvert County  
Public Schools**

Daniel D. Curry, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

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Comments to Kirwan Commission  
October 25, 2017

Daniel D. Curry, Ed.D.  
Superintendent, Calvert County Public Schools

Good evening. My name is Dan Curry and it is my privilege to serve as Superintendent of Calvert County Public Schools since 2014. I have been a district superintendent since 1987 – that’s right, 30 years ago – in West Virginia and Delaware. In that time, I have been responsible for student achievement and closing the gap in five (5) uniquely different districts with students in poverty from 75% to 22%. I’ve seen a great deal of well-intentioned reforms and initiatives from 7 governors, 15 state legislators and 8 state superintendents.

I understand your charge has been to review current funding formulas and to propose policies and strategies that will close the achievement gaps in Maryland.

First, let me say that I am an officer of PSSAM, the Public School Superintendents’ Association of Maryland. You have received a letter on our behalf from our President, Dr. D’Ette Devine stating our collective position on funding, Teaching, Standards and Accountability, Assessments and Diversity. PSSAM is the voice for the children of Maryland and we speak as one.

Tonight, I would like to briefly speak to a few recommendations for your consideration that are based upon my experiences.

1. **Early Learning** Maryland Kindergarten Readiness Assessments data from last school year indicates only 43% of those tested were ready to learn. This is where the gap is first measured and clearly noted. What are we going to propose we do about it? I applaud any and all efforts that the state can make to be sure that quality pre-school opportunities are available to all children, but if we really want to give children the best opportunity to start school ready to learn, we must start earlier. Research suggests that a child’s brain is 80% developed by age 3.

What parents and guardians do at home from birth to 3 is so critical to our success. Knowing that, why don’t we invade that space with information and support? We all have our programs that provide some support in this way for income eligible families. But there are a lot of fine models in this country that could be Marylandized and made available to all – not just certain qualifying families – to all. I commend to you one model worth considering – Boston Basics. The Boston Basics are five fun, simple, and powerful ways that every family can give every child a great start in life. Check it out at [bostonbasics.org](http://bostonbasics.org) .

2. **Student Growth over Proficiency** When it comes to state tests, such as PARCC, the focus is on what percent score a 4 or 5 which is deemed proficient. Proficiency is good to know and a target to

hit, but developing skills of teachers and principals at measuring and monitoring individual student growth will tell us even more about what is working and what is not.

A 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher with 24 students may know that 66% of his students scored proficient on PARCC in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. We might consider it a worthy goal for him to aim for 75% of his students to score proficient on PARCC this year. To do that, he would only need to identify those students who scored a high 3 in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and get two of them to score 4 or higher.

Contrast that with setting a goal for 75% of his students to move up one point. 1 to 2, 2-3, 3-4, 4-5. Might the instructional strategies change with such a goal?

It is only when we develop competence and confidence in measuring and using growth data that we will close the gaps.

- 3. Collaborative Planning** I know that some of the models you've reviewed from other countries call for teachers to have more time to plan, to collaborate and to remediate. That's a worthy goal with major cost ramifications. In light of the fact that all 24 Maryland school districts have negotiated contracts, it may take a long, long time to find a way to replicate.

In the meantime, we mustn't neglect the potential for incremental steps when it comes to making time for teachers to plan together, develop materials and assessments together, review results together and to plan next steps based upon the data.

The most effective practice I have ever observed to have an impact on student performance and closing the gap has been an initiative imposed upon all Delaware schools under the Race to the Top Plan. The plan required, and State Superintendent Lillian Lowery enforced, that each teacher would have 90 contiguous minutes each and every week to collaborate. Race to the Top also initiated positions called data coaches who facilitated and taught our principal and teacher teams how to use that time to focus on student data with an eye toward growth.

It was highly effective. Daily collaboration may seem a long way off, but with state financial support, weekly collaboration can make a proven difference in student success.

- 4.** My final point I will make is that rather than look around the world for best practices that have evolved in environments and cultures that are not much like the USA, we mustn't underestimate the value of learning best practices from within these United States and within Maryland itself.

Finally, I commend to you this book. It was published in 1989 at a time where everyone seemed to be suggesting that America needed to be more like Japan – that we should emulate the way the Japanese do business. James Fallows, in his book *More Like Us: Making American Great Again* opposed that position and concluded that America could “regain its momentum and greatness by becoming more like us – that is more disorganized, risk-taking, nontraditional, socially mobile and open.”

So, let me conclude that for Maryland Schools, currently ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in the nation by some measures, to return to 1<sup>st</sup>, the answer is more than likely not found in some country across the ocean. The answer to that return to greatness will most likely be found within us and the talented people we have here. We have great universities who need to prepare more world class teachers.

We have great resources in business partnerships and government access. We have families who move here because of our schools. We have some schools who have demonstrated that they know

how to raise the achievement and close the gaps. Although we should be open to reviewing all potential models of success not for adoption but for adaptation.

We will find our greatest success when we commit to the vision that we will be More Like Us: Making Maryland Great Again.

Thank you.

October 25, 2017

To: The Kirwan Commission

From: Sally Nazelrod

Thank you for the opportunity and thank you for your hard work.

I retired from the Baltimore County Public Schools after 42 years. I was the coordinator of Health Education and Physical Education in that system. Tonight, I'm here to represent every zip code in Maryland and hope that I can share the value and importance of health education and physical education for all of our Maryland students.

Does your health matter to you? How about the health of your children, your grandchildren, or your students? I believe that everyone in this room would want to be healthy or healthier, and want better health for their friends and family.

Knowledge is the answer!

Both Health Education and Physical Education are required in Maryland. Each student in Maryland in grades K-8 must have both subjects every year. At the high school level, these courses are required for graduation. We could actually use more required health and physical education to cover the current information and give our students more movement time!

We need healthy children in Maryland. Healthy, physically active, children learn better. They come to school to learn. When the Every Student Succeeds Act was passed, ESSA, as it is called, states needed to identify what data they were already collecting to put in their plan. Attendance will be one criteria. We want our children in school. They don't come if they are sick.

Health Education at various grade levels provides our students with information regarding nutrition, mental and emotional health, personal wellness, safety, injury prevention, alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, human development, and consumer health. They learn about healthy behaviors and how to make the right decisions as they face daily challenges. Our Governor, Larry Hogan, has recognized the need for increased health education to combat the opioid crisis. Children need to learn about the misuse of prescription drugs.

Physical Education teaches how to move safely, how to develop skills for play, how to play, how to be a team player, and how to work together to achieve a common goal. Quality physical education provides a balance of rhythmic activities, individual activities, team activities, cooperative games, and life time activities. Give students choices of activity and they will find at least one that they like enough to pursue for a lifetime

Physical education classes also incorporate personal fitness knowledge, assessments, and goal setting.

Do you know the components of health and skill related components of fitness? Do you know what activities promote a particular component of fitness? For example, cardiovascular fitness can be increased if one participates in an activity like brisk walking, running, rope jumping, swimming, or bicycling that elevates the heart rate for a sustained period of time.

Every day, we read about increasing obesity rates. There is an increase in the onset of diabetes at an earlier age. Children as well as adults, suffer from depression and other mental health issues. The more we can prevent, the better off our children will be in the future.

Our national organization, SHAPE America –The Society of Health and Physical Educators, has created National Standards with grade level outcomes for both Health and Physical Education. All of our children need access to health education and physical education every year. Can we just make sure that they get it! What is graded and appears on the report card, is taught.

The goal for all Maryland children is to understand the value of a healthy lifestyle and maintain it. That begins with getting the facts, applying the information, and making the decisions.

Please write down these 3 words. Five More Years. Google it when you get home. It is a powerful video interviewing children when asked what they would do with 5 extra years in their life.

The statistics say that this is the first generation in recorded history that may not outlive their parents.

Let's look at prevention through education. Our insurance companies will certainly like prevention rather than treatment.

We have the opportunity to make the difference in the health of our Maryland children.

We have the content to share.

I value all of the academic subjects that are mandated in our state. I appreciate the impact of fine arts on children. All of the content areas contribute to the education of whole child, our goal in Maryland.

But I leave, you with this thought----If you don't take care of your body, where will you live?

Thank you!

Sally Nazelrod

Executive Director

MAHPERD- Maryland Association for Health, Physical education, Recreation, and Dance

443-277-0112

**Michael Raup**  
**University of Maryland, Baltimore County**  
**Public Testimony to Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education**  
**October 25, 2017**  
**Largo High School**  
**505 Largo Road**  
**Upper Marlboro, MD 20774**

**Problem:** Some students are not able to graduate from college because they are unable to pass English composition. We do not have the infrastructure or support system in place for helping students who lack the foundation needed for success in writing in college. Meanwhile, some international students in Maryland appear to demonstrate greater proficiency in writing skills than native Maryland students do. Consider the following:

- Nearly 30% of high school graduates needed remediation in English in Maryland from 2008-2009.<sup>1</sup>
- Students who take English placement exams and remedial coursework in Maryland community colleges are more likely to receive a lower grade and take longer to graduate than their peers who did not need remedial coursework in the first place.<sup>2</sup>
- About 70% of employers in 2016 desired college graduates to have written communication skills.<sup>3</sup>

**Solution:** Based on the study of the top international education systems in the world, we should create an individualized learning environment that is customized to each student's needs in accordance with the Every Student Succeeds Act. This will be provided by establishing writing specialists in Maryland public school classrooms to assist English teachers and by creating writing centers where needed in middle and high schools.

- Hire writing specialists with Master's degrees specializing in English (or currently in a graduate teaching program) to assist English teachers or teach in their own classrooms.
- Redesign Master's programs as necessary to make prospective teachers experts in their schools.
- Writing specialists will divide up the class into small groups and provide more feedback and support to students through conferences. They can assist with grading if necessary.
- Each grade level has a specialist who becomes a master instructor over other teachers. The master instructor co-designs curriculums with other master instructors across grade levels to ensure both content and expectations are properly aligned among elementary, middle, and high schools.
- Writing centers can be used in current available space in middle or high schools.
- They can be staffed by outside writing professionals who have expertise in English as a Second Language and learning disabilities. The center will work on referrals only.

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland Higher Education Commission. "Student Outcome and Achievement Report." 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Maryland Longitudinal Data System. "Remedial Coursework in Maryland: Examining Trends, High School Predictors, and College Outcomes." 2016.

<sup>3</sup> National Association of Colleges and Employers. "Job Outlook 2016."

Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education  
Wednesday, October 25, 2017  
Largo High School, Upper Marlboro, MD  
Jennifer Rice, PhD, Dean of Education, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

Testimony of Jennifer Rice, PhD, College of Education, University of Maryland, on behalf of Laurie Mullen, PhD, Dean, College of Education, Towson University and Joshua Smith, PhD, Dean, School of Education, Loyola University Maryland, Co-Chairs of the USM/MICUA Deans and Directors Council; and in consultation with the co-chairs of the Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT) Oversight Council

Chairman Kirwan and Commissioners:

Thank you for giving us an opportunity to offer some reflections and reactions to the draft recommendations of the Commission.

We represent the higher education deans and directors of education from all the public and private universities and colleges in the State of Maryland. As a group, we meet regularly to address issues facing teacher education in Maryland, and to collaborate with each other to problem solve and promote teaching as a profession. We believe that “teaching matters most,” and we applaud the work you are doing to promote and advocate for the best teachers for all our children.

**We strongly support Building blocks 5, 6 and 8.** Recruiting the best teacher candidates and the best teachers requires that we redesign schools and the profession to ensure that teachers are valued for the work they do, are treated as professionals, and are supported to continually improve their practice.

With respect to the specific draft recommendations that are being considered by the Commission we believe the following recommendations are most important to strengthening the educator pipeline, respecting educators as professionals, and ensuring that our data systems are up-to-date, relevant and accessible to ensure continuous improvement of educator preparation programs and schools:

**Recruit Teachers from among the top high school graduates:** This recommendation can be operationalized by ensuring that scholarships, loan-forgiveness, paid internships (student teaching), and other incentives are made available to highly qualified applicants. We should be recruiting teachers with the same energy and creativity that we are recruiting STEM majors. We are committed to recruiting and admitting students with a range of academic backgrounds and personal skills who demonstrate strong dispositions to become excellent teachers. Single measures, such as SAT or GPA are incomplete and even misleading predictors of teacher quality.

Likewise, the recommendation to reduce the number of teacher preparation programs offered by Maryland colleges and universities would negatively impact access and diversity in the teaching profession. It is important that high quality academic programs are geographically available across the State and offered at distinctive and diverse institutions—research universities, HBCUs, master’s level universities, liberal arts colleges, special focus institutions, and community colleges. We believe the State should hold teacher candidates and teacher preparation institutions and alternative pathways to high standards with accountability for outcomes and consequences for failure, but that limiting access to the profession should not be an underlying goal.

We all want a teacher workforce that is diverse (reflecting the diversity of our student population) and highly skilled, and we know that diversity of our teacher workforce depends on a diversity of strong teacher candidates and teacher preparation programs across the state.

We believe one effective way to recruit highly qualified, passionately committed educators is to intentionally build pathways and pipelines from high school, through community colleges and into Maryland colleges and universities. Maryland was the first state to implement a 2+2+2 pathway into teaching: 22 of our 24 LEAs have “Teacher Academies,” CTE programs where high school students can earn early college credits toward teacher education programs, and all our community colleges have AAT programs (Associate of Arts of Teaching) aligned with the public and private professional teacher education programs so that students can transfer seamlessly.

**Revamp teacher education so elementary teachers specialize in math/science or humanities:** This recommendation may require an extended program (5-year) to accommodate the necessary course work plus clinical internship experiences. We strongly support public funding for the extended fifth year program. That is the best way to ensure elementary teachers will have the time they need to fully develop their competencies.

**Create a career ladder in education, and include incentives for teaching in high need and rural schools:** Career ladders can be powerful incentives for excellent teaching. Rewarding excellent teachers who teach in high needs schools recognizes the special challenges that lead to special competencies. New models, including micro credentials, can be adapted to build teachers capacities and teacher-leadership opportunities.

**Strengthen Induction by setting high standards for mentors and monitoring quality:** Teacher induction is a woefully undervalued component of a teacher’s professional education. One to three years of induction (pre-tenure), should be the ideal, during which time new teachers have multiple opportunities to work with mentors, colleagues, and faculty from universities to master their professional skills.

**Change the way schools are organized and managed to create a more professional environment, allowing teachers to work with struggling students, observe classes, conduct applied research, and meet collaboratively with colleagues to develop plans to improve student learning:** We believe that a great school environment, including school leadership, induction and mentoring opportunities, and continuous data-driven professional development will go a long way to recruiting and retaining the very best teachers.

The Commission has recommended alternative pathways into teaching not be eliminated but that they be modified and strengthened. We can support this goal. Many of our colleges and universities provide alternative pathways for career changers and returning adult students, partnering with school systems to provide flexible entry programs into the profession. We believe all pathways into teaching should be modified and strengthened, not just alternative pathways. Both traditional and non-traditional teacher preparation providers should be held to the same performance standards and outcomes.

Finally, we want to call attention to four special issues that may not have arisen in the gap analysis prepared by NCEE, but topics that could make a difference to our programs and our students:

1. We need data on our programs to inform and improve the preparation of effective beginning teachers. We are committed to evidence-based improvement, and we ask that the commission

hold both traditional and alternative preparation programs to the same high standards and quality control expectations. Today, we do not have a reliable system that can track our teachers into the workforce. We have to assign staff to call every single school district, with lists of our graduates and plead with them to match their personnel records with our graduation records. Better tracking of teachers entering and leaving would inform both traditional and alternative programs.

2. Our students deserve a better state security system so they don't have to go to multiple district offices to get fingerprinted. Today, when they are assigned to different internship experiences in different counties, they are required to go to every county separately to get fingerprinted before they can enter the school. Can't we work out a central fingerprint data system so this costly, inefficient balkanized process is less burdensome on our teacher candidates?
3. Our best teacher quality assessments are rich because, in addition to multiple choice tests of content knowledge, they draw on contextualized information, such as video tapes of students and interns in classrooms. But schools are not always willing to allow our students to video-tape their classes, even with strong privacy protections for students. We need a way to work through this stumbling block so we can provide the best instruction and feedback to our teacher candidates.
4. A related issue is school-based research. Our faculty are trained experts in social science research, and in partnership with local schools, we believe we can contribute to solving the toughest problems facing teachers, principals and superintendents. Encouraging partnerships between higher education and K-12 schools would be a long-lasting, positive outcome from the Commission.

We believe that teachers matter most. Colleges of education grow future teachers. "Students can't learn what they haven't been taught, and teachers can't teach what they haven't learned."

Thank you.

## 6 Simple Ways to Improve Education in Maryland

By Jerome Dancis, Associate Professor Emeritus, Math Dept., Univ. of MD

→ **Recommendation 1.** Schools in poor neighborhoods could have a school pediatrician, school dentist, school psychological counseling in addition to the school nurse.. A student with a toothache, or an illness or who cannot see the board clearly is a student not ready to learn. Medicaid might fund some of this.

→ **Recommendation 2:** Only students who exceed the expectations on the PARCC Math 7 exam will skip Math 8 and take Algebra I in Grade 8?

\* 9,000 (43% of) Grade 8 Algebra I students scored less than "proficient" on the 2017 PARCC Algebra I exam ". But, students studying Algebra in Grade 8 are supposed to be exceptionally good ones.

\* 8,000 students, who scored less than proficient on the 2016 PARCC Math 7 exam took Algebra I in 2016-2017. This suggests social promotion into Grade 8 Algebra.

→ **Recommendation 3. Intervention** needed for the almost four out of five (78%) Grade 9 Algebra I students who scored less than proficient on the PARCC Math 8 exam. **Example.** They will study Algebra over two years (Algebra I Part I, which will largely be Arithmetic and Algebra I Part II).

**Example.** They will study Arithmetic in a second Math class simultaneously with Grade 9 Algebra I.

→ **Recommendation 4.** Provide good textbooks. For the elementary grades, use the Singapore Math textbooks (which were written in simple English for Singapore students for whom English was not their native language.) See Appendix.

In 2007, I was a duly sworn official of the state of California. I was a Content Review Panel (CRP) member charged with review of four Grades 4-7 Math textbooks series, which are supposed to help students, who are a year behind in Math, to catch up. What jumped out at me was that the textbook writers had little training on how to write mathematics coherently, clearly, comprehensively, logically, accurately and precisely without being cryptic, vague, ambiguous, or obscure as well as how to distinguish a correct mathematical argument from an *incorrect or incomplete* mathematical argument.

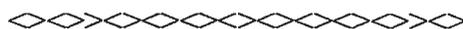
→ **Recommendation 5.** Fill in the loopholes in the Common Core middle school math curriculum.

**Example.** If the state wants high school students to know that 50 % is a half, the state needs to add it to the middle school math curriculum. It is not in the Common Core math curriculum.

**Example.** If the state wants students to learn how to do the many Arithmetic problems on the Math SAT, the state needs to add Math SAT Arithmetic problems to the middle school math curriculum. Teaching the Common Core math curriculum is not sufficient.

→ **Recommendation 6.** Raise the standards on the teacher licensing tests so that passing the tests will ensure that all teachers (not just some teachers) are knowledgeable in the subjects listed on their licenses. If the state wants that all classes (not just some classes) will be taught by a teacher knowledgeable in the subject, then the state needs more demanding teacher licensing tests and requirements to ensure this.

If the state wants that all teachers (not just some teachers), will write and speak coherently, clearly, comprehensively, logically, accurately and precisely without being cryptic, vague, ambiguous, or obscure, then the state needs to add teacher licensing tests which will require this.



## Appendix

### Singapore Primary Mathematics Texts & Guidance of a Mathematics Professor Jump Scores at an Inner-city Title 1 School

Ramona Elementary School is an inner-city school (in the Los Angeles Unified District). "Ramona easily qualifies for federal Title 1 funds, which are intended to alleviate the effects of poverty. Nine of every 10 students at the school are eligible for free or reduced-price meals (FARM). For the most part, these are the children of immigrants, the majority from Central America, some from Armenia. Nearly six in 10 students speak English as a second language." (The Los Angeles Times, March 9, 2008)

Let's look at Ramona Elementary School's Grade 5 results on the California Standards Math Test for the three years before and after using Singapore Primary Mathematics Texts under the guidance of Mathematics Professor Yoram Sagher. (About one teacher in four chose to ignore the guidance):

**2003-2005:** Percent of Students scoring Proficient and Advanced: **43%-56%**  
**2006-2008:** Percent of Students scoring Proficient and Advanced: **71%-76%**

<b>Before:</b> Percent <b>advanced:</b> <b>15%-26%</b>	Average Scaled scores (all students)	<b>349- 378</b>
<b>After:</b> Percent <b>advanced:</b> <b>35%-43%</b>	Average Scaled scores	<b>395- 412</b>

Data from the California Department of Education's (CDE) website.

Email: [jnd@math.umd.edu](mailto:jnd@math.umd.edu)

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<sup>1</sup> "Proficient" means at least met PARCC standards.

<sup>2</sup> Based on data in MSDE 2017 PARCC results August 2017 presentation to Maryland State BOE at

<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/08222017/TabG-PARCCResults.pdf>



## Maryland State Chapter health, safety and equity in education

Good Evening Kirwan Commission:

October 25, 2017

I am Lisa VanBuskirk, Chapter Leader of Start School Later Maryland, one of 5 chapters in our state affiliated with Start School Later, a national nonprofit advocacy organization that seeks to educate communities and school systems about the physical, emotional and academic harm caused by too-early school start times for adolescents. I testified before you in July, in the hopes that your draft recommendations would include a reference to the benefits of later middle and high school start times. But there is no explicit reference.

After Blocks 3 and 4, the discussion question asks "Is there a desire to discuss and make recommendations on the structure ...of each school day?"

Yes, there must be.

**Students can't be college and career ready if they are asleep in class.** Less than 24% of Maryland's high school students get a minimum of 8 hours of sleep on school nights, down from 59% of Maryland's middle schoolers<sup>1</sup>. These students need 9 or more hours of sleep. Walk into any early starting high school in the state and even in the classrooms of the most engaging teachers, students are asleep at their desks.

**Students can't be college and career ready if they are chronically absent or do not graduate.** Study after study has shown that later school start times decrease chronic absenteeism and increase graduation rates. Disadvantaged middle and high school students benefit the most from later school start times. Later school start times are another way to close the achievement gap.

In August, the Rand Corporation released an economic analysis of the benefits from increased graduation rates and decreased teen deaths from drowsy driving.<sup>2</sup> The report estimates that \$9 billion could be added annually to the national economy by starting middle and high schools after 8:30. The report further details the direct economic benefit to 47 individual states. Two states already have an average start time after 8:30 a.m., so they were excluded from the study. Publicly available school start time data was used for Rand's Calculations. **The only state not included in the Rand study? Maryland.**

I spent 2 days scouring school system websites and calling individual schools. I have the start times for every public middle and high school in the state<sup>3</sup>. How can the Maryland State Department of Education not have that information?

By my calculations, the average Maryland high school start time is 7:54 a.m. The average Maryland middle school start time is 8:11 a.m. The national average is 8:03. As a reminder, numerous public health groups and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control all recommend start times *no earlier* than 8:30 a.m. There *are* middle and high schools that start after 8:30 across the state. But not enough.

Even without Maryland specific data, it is clear from the Rand analysis that the predicted payback for shifting school start times begins within two to three years. The Rand analysis assumed an annual transportation increase of \$150 per student, but many school systems across the country have found cost-neutral transportation solutions, or even saved money on transportation. With the average Maryland high school starting nine minutes earlier than the national average, surely the economic benefits to Maryland will be better than average.

Start School Later cannot ask the Rand Corporation to evaluate the economic benefits to our state. Someone from the state government must do so. Who better than the Kirwan Commission to ask for the economic return on investment in healthy and safe school hours?

The 2014 joint report from MSDE and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, "encouraged ...[school systems] to conduct

<sup>1</sup> <https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/ccdpc/Reports/Documents/2014%20YRBS%20Reports/2014MDH%20Summary%20Tables.pdf> Question 88.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2109.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2109.html) Economic Benefits of Later School Start Times in the U.S.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.startschoollater.net/uploads/9/7/9/6/9796500/maryland-hs\\_start\\_times-8-2017.pdf](http://www.startschoollater.net/uploads/9/7/9/6/9796500/maryland-hs_start_times-8-2017.pdf) and <http://www.startschoollater.net/uploads/9/7/9/6/9796500/maryland-middle-school-start-times-2017-2018.pdf>

feasibility studies regarding the implementation of school starting times of 8 a.m. or later.”<sup>4</sup> That encouragement alone was insufficient to entice any school system not already discussing start times, to start. Likewise, the Orange Ribbon for Healthy School Hours was signed into law in 2016. Applications to request recognition for the first round of awards were due last month. Zero school systems applied, though several were eligible for lower tiers of recognition.

New effort is needed at the state level to help school systems with this intractable challenge.

**What does it take to enact school hours that are healthy, safe, and developmentally appropriate? Courage and Leadership.** All of you understand leadership. You are leaders in your respective communities and you are a part of this Commission because you want it to exhibit educational leadership for the state. Please demonstrate the necessary leadership and include a discussion of the documented benefits of later middle and high school start times in the Kirwan Commission’s report.

As the 2014 joint report from Maryland's departments of health and education eloquently stated:

*“Any consideration of a statewide mandate for a later school start time must consider the unique needs of each of the 24 local jurisdictions. However, in preserving the status quo whereby school start times are a matter for each local jurisdiction, **the state risks letting local resistance trump a strong body of scientific evidence that sleep is critical to health and academic achievement.**”<sup>5</sup>*

Later school start times aren’t innovative from the perspective that they are a new, untested solution. They are time-tested, validated, researched, and well-documented for their health, safety, academic, and now, economic benefits. None of the school systems across the nation that made this change in the interest of the students, have reverted to their earlier school start times. Later start times have been instituted in large, medium, and small schools as well as in rural, suburban, and urban settings. They are not a panacea to all educational challenges, but are vastly underappreciated for their positive impacts.

As the Kirwan Commission looks at the ways in which educational policies both improve and hinder student academic success, I hope that you will correct the glaring omission of the positive impacts that healthy, safe, and developmentally-appropriate school hours have for all K-12 students in your final report.

Thank you,



**Lisa VanBuskirk, P.E.**, Chapter Leader, Start School Later Maryland | Start School Later Anne Arundel County [sslaaco@gmail.com](mailto:sslaaco@gmail.com)

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.startschoolslater.net/uploads/9/7/9/6/9796500/maryland\\_dhmv\\_school\\_start\\_time\\_report\\_123114.pdf](http://www.startschoolslater.net/uploads/9/7/9/6/9796500/maryland_dhmv_school_start_time_report_123114.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid



## Maryland Coalition for Gifted and Talented Education

*An Affiliate of the  
National Association for Gifted Children*

**Date:** October 25, 2017

**To:** Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education, General Assembly of MD

**From:** Yvonne Golczewski, MCGATE President

**Re:** Gifted Education

Good evening. Thank you for taking my statement into consideration.

U.S. leadership in innovation and economic power is in jeopardy. Other countries challenge their students to reach their potential, while we aim for proficiency. Other countries spend millions on gifted education, while we ignore the educational needs of our brightest students and spend almost nothing on them.

Underrepresentation of minority and disadvantaged groups in gifted programs is rampant. As our education policy focuses nearly exclusively on grade-level achievement in an effort to close the achievement gap for struggling learners, another achievement gap has been widening. Research shows that an “**excellence gap**” between white students and students of color is growing.<sup>1</sup>

The parents, who are educated about other options and can afford it, pick up the slack and take the responsibility for meeting their children’s needs on their own. This has led to misconceived stereotypes. But, giftedness can be found in every demographic population.

Ensuring the availability of gifted education programs and services at *every* grade level for *all* students who would benefit from the challenge, combined with equitable identification procedures, would reduce the underrepresentation of diverse learners in gifted education programs and put more learners from every population in a position to increase their achievement and maximize their potential.”<sup>2</sup>

Underachievement and disengagement is also rampant. **Who wants to sit through classes where you already know the material?** Many hate school and become bored, disillusioned and disengaged. Some get into trouble finding ways to entertain themselves. Research shows a disproportionate number of gifted students drop out of school. I know this to be true too well because I am one of them. It is a myth that they are doing fine and make it on their own. They cannot teach themselves.

**All children should be challenged to grow, including our most able students. All students should demonstrate academic progress, even those working above grade level.**

My recommendations:

1) **Because most gifted students are served in the regular classroom, we *must* train all pre-service and in-service teachers to properly identify gifted learners and then to know what to do with them.** By far, this will have the greatest impact of any of my recommendations. Gifted pedagogy is a collection of best practices that are good for *all* students, not just the gifted ones. It will increase the quality of our teachers and lead to improved classroom experiences. The inability of teachers to identify and challenge all of our gifted students is a factor in the excellence gap.

**According to ESSA, districts that receive Title II money are now required to use the funds, in part, to address the learning needs of gifted and talented students.** Maryland districts *must* be required to develop specific plans for its Title II funds to meet this requirement.

2) Gifted students exist in Title I schools. **ESSA recognizes this and explicitly allows Title I funds to be used for gifted education.**

3) **Adopt an acceleration policy.** Acceleration is inexpensive. See the University of Iowa's Acceleration Institute's website for the research behind it and a policy guide. This is best way to meet these students' needs.<sup>3</sup>

4) **Put some teeth into MSDE's regulation mandating gifted education.** Many districts ignore COMAR 13A.04.07 because there is neither a monetary incentive nor any repercussions. Gifted policies and programs are nonexistent or have been diluted in too many LEAs. I have seen master plans where the gifted section was left blank and nothing was said about it. I believe that because these students are not considered important enough to receive any state funding, LEAs do not think it is important either. LEA's need to be held accountable for implementing with fidelity the requirements of COMAR and federal ESSA legislation.

5) LEAs need to get over any qualms they may have about the word "gifted." These students *do* exist and we have to call them something. **Gifted students *are* a student group.** Federal law recognizes this.

But, some LEAs are not identifying these students as a separate subgroup as required by ESSA. LEAs must be required to present disaggregated data in their master plans showing whether gifted students are being provided with educational services that allow them to advance appropriately in their learning and knowledge over the course of the school year.<sup>4</sup>

***We will never be innovative or excellent as long as we continue to ignore our brightest students. Let us stop holding these children back and help them reach their potential.***

I will close with a quote:

"Just as you wouldn't toss a child that could not swim into the deep end of a pool because it is inhumane, you wouldn't want to make an Olympic swimmer stay in the shallow end while everyone else learns to swim." (Author Unknown)

I am available to answer any questions or to provide further information. Please contact me at the email address on the brochure.

Sincerely,

**Yvonne Golczewski**

President, MCGATE

Cell: 484-431-9483

Email: [president@mccgate.org](mailto:president@mccgate.org)

Website: <http://mccgate.org>

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan A. Plucker, PhD, Nathan Burroughs, PhD, Ruiting Song, Mind the Other Gap! The Growing Excellence Gap in K-12 Education. (2010) <http://www.jkcf.org/assets/1/7/ExcellenceGapBrief - Plucker.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/timely-topics/including-diverse-learners-gifted-education-programs>

<sup>3</sup> <http://accelerationinstitute.org>

<sup>4</sup> The MSDE February 28, 2012, press release about the adoption of COMAR 13A.04.07 Gifted and Talented Education stated that "State Board members today made it clear that they will be monitoring reports and data from local school systems to make certain the new policy acts as a catalyst for improved services for [gifted and talented] students." **This has not happened.** LEAs must be required to provide the data that will make possible the monitoring of identification and programming for gifted and talented students. The state MSDE Lead Specialist for Gifted and Talented Education should be empowered to collect such basic data for accountability and support to LEAs.

# Donation Application

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Maryland Coalition for Gifted  
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1823 Morning Brook Drive  
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The Voice For Maryland's  
Gifted Children



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A Parent and Professional Advocacy  
Charitable Organization

and

State Affiliate of the National Association  
for Gifted Children



<http://mcgate.org>

**Testimony to the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education**  
**By Paul Geller, Community Advocate**  
**Wednesday, October 25, 2017**  
**Largo High School, Upper Marlboro, Maryland**

Dr. Kirwan and Distinguished Members of the Commission:

Thank you for this opportunity to address you this evening.

As a former local, county and state PTA leader, the best information I received came from our teachers. Our teachers are no ordinary mortals, they are educational superheroes! These incredible folks teach our 848,166+ public school students here in Maryland and dedicate their lives to making sure our next generation of leaders and citizens are well prepared for their future...and are also ready to take care of us when we retire.

Over and over again, wherever I went, three requests were shared with me by our teachers: the need for more dedicated planning time, a more standardized and unwavering curriculum, and less testing on all fronts.

**First, planning time is a universal must have item across the board.** Teachers and other educators need time to prepare specific lesson plans for their students. Often this time is usurped to review benchmarks with administrators and discuss improving student performance, sometimes dipping down to the micromanagement level. This gobbledygook strays from concern about the individual student to concern about making the school look good. Regardless, it places the needs of our students second and educators are tired of it.

Teachers have shared their experiences with me of well-intentioned administrators taking teacher planning time to review test scores for students in their class. This forces teachers to make up for valuable planning time by staying later after school to prepare lesson plans, review student classwork and homework, and take home more work almost every night and weekend. Some brave souls told me they would be leaving teaching all together if this situation did not change. They became teachers to teach. Let them do so.

My request: in your final report, please emphasize the absolute importance of allocating sacrosanct time for planning. Teachers need it to effectively tailor their lesson plans for their students. A teacher knows her/his students better than any other educator or administrator. Let us show our teachers respect by allowing them to use their planning time as they see fit. Teachers should not subjugate their desire to prepare for class by the pressure to improve test scores. Planning time used at the discretion of the teacher should be emphasized.

**Second, wholesale changes to the curriculum need to abate.** We were able to place a dozen humans on the Moon between 1969 and 1972, all of whom were educated in the 1930s - 1950s. Back then the basics were reading, writing and arithmetic. Those subjects got us off this planet. Yet today, we have people tinkering with the curriculum frequently. Teachers tell me this is due to changes made by the State Board of Education and by the local school systems. While some changes may be necessary, some curriculum tweaks are being issued weekly and monthly during the school year. This does a tremendous disservice to our educators. It allows little time for teachers to analyze and discuss the new curriculum and gear it to the specific needs of their classroom.

My request: encourage all interested parties to minimize wholesale changes to the curriculum so teachers can tailor the curriculum to the needs of their students. Place curriculum changes in the hands of paid committees of educators, a majority of whom should be active classroom teachers. This process should start during the summer and continue through the school year with teachers being paid and/or offered incentives for helping make these changes. Then, this new curriculum should be released to classroom teachers for feedback with a goal of rolling out curriculum changes by May so teachers have time to adapt it for use by September.

**Third, standardized testing has gotten out of hand.** Enough is enough. Our students are over tested. Many teachers and staff members are sick of it, and some have shared their experiences with me of students literally being brought to tears over taking standardized tests.

My request: choose one assessment and stick with it. Excessive standardized testing is an unnecessary burden for our students. Draw the line and set a limit. One standardized test in the fall and another in the spring should be sufficient. The Maryland School Assessment was one benchmark. Now with PARCC and more we simply have too many assessments. Standardized tests should measure ability and progress. Instead, as has been shared with me, these tests have become the drivers of educational effort. The result? We have a generation of students prepared to take tests and not think independently. What good is that?

**Additionally, and on a separate note, we have a great need for two items from the state: greater funding of our public schools and universal early childhood education.**

All twenty-four jurisdictions can most certainly use more funding for their operating budgets. This is the money used for hiring/compensating teachers and staff, acquiring classroom materials and more. With the shift of education pensions now on the local jurisdictions, common sense dictates the funds the state freed up should be available for new purposes. Let us invest these funds in educating our students.

And, since the Knott Commission seemed to eliminate a meeting at which funding for school construction projects was to be discussed, allow me to add one key suggestion to that discussion. Since we need new and renovated schools statewide, we should draw from the revenue source promised to us as a panacea for our educational system: casino gambling revenue. The state takes millions into our coffers from this enterprise. Yet, the percentage of profit ceded over to the operators of these casinos is quite far from the good deal we were led to believe. **Please include the need for the state to fund more school construction and renovation projects through enhanced casino gambling revenue percentages.**

**Finally, we need universal early childhood education in Maryland.** The glaring difference between students who have never been in a classroom before and those who have had preschool experience is shocking in a Kindergarten class. And, the gap is seldom made up despite the best efforts of all involved. We need to offer our four years olds, and preferably younger ones too, educational opportunities. Individual jurisdictions are considering proposals now. My appeal to your commission is to include bold language in your final report recommending early childhood educational opportunities for our youngest learners.

Thank you for this opportunity to address you this evening, and for your service to all our public school students, teachers, administrators and families in Maryland.

*All the best!*



Paul Geller

Community Advocate

Proud PTA Member and retired PTA leader at the local, county and state level.

Recipient of the Maryland PTA Lifetime Achievement Award

Good Evening,

Today I'd like to speak about my students. Demarcus is the student who doesn't sit still, who needs to ask questions, who wants to be heard, who wants to be seen. Isaiah's returning from an alternative school for fighting and today he's told he needs to be more responsible and can't charge his Chromebook during class so Isaiah sits glaring at a teacher who doesn't seek to understand him. Diamond just transferred from New York and is trying to find her place. She stands up for herself and doesn't want other girls to think they can walk over. Diamond's suspended for 5 days for fighting. Kamarie is repeating the 10th grade after repeating the 9th with little to no credits earned. Kamarie skips class, gets kicked out of his house, self medicates, and fights negative thoughts.

I teach and service these children everyday. I touch lives and take their stories home with me everyday. When I speak and advocate, my students give me words even when my voice trembles. My name is Sheena Washington. I am a dually certified History and Special Education teacher and I'm an IEP Case Manager. In my 8 years of teaching in schools with high concentrations of poverty, there are student names and student stories which I will never forget. Our children come to us with deep trauma and are in need of wrap around services. Our schools have become so entrenched in a high stakes testing culture that social and emotional learning has become an anomaly. I am standing here tonight speaking for Demarcus, Isaiah, Diamond, Kamarie, and so many others who need caring school communities before they can even begin access learning.

Our schools need to be adequately and equitably funded to support the needs of our students! We need a revised formula in Maryland that provides additional funds for schools with high concentrations of poverty and funds should be allocated to schools with the highest needs first. Community schools should be the new norm in Maryland with embedded supports for students, their families, and surrounding neighbors to create a better society. Our schools should have restorative practices where students and educators build relationships and community, foster inclusion, and ensure safe, supportive, learning environments.

Additional funding is needed to support students with disabilities and English language learners as our schools need innovative approaches to providing Special Education and ESOL service delivery. In honor of my students, in honor of Demarcus, Isaiah, Diamond, and Kamarie, it is my hope that our funding formula changes so that zip codes no longer determine the services available to students and community members. Our schools are a reflection of our values as a society; the schools we create mirror the society we create. Our students are our future.

Sheena Washington

History Teacher, Special Education Teacher, IEP Case Manager  
Restorative Practices Advocate, Varsity Girl's Lacrosse Coach  
Prince George's County Educators' Association Board of Director



Chairman Kirwan and members of the commission,

My name is Jodi Bortz. I am a founding member of Support Our Schools, based in Kent County Maryland. **The Support Our Schools (SOS) Initiative** is a grassroots advocacy effort devoted to increasing awareness of and support for the needs, challenges, and untapped potential of Kent County's public school system.

As Maryland's smallest school district, we are both heartened and concerned by the preliminary reports that were filed by the commission in December of last year. Kent County is home to Maryland's first full day universal Pre-K program, a best practice that was recommended in the preliminary report which has returned high dividends in Kindergarten readiness for our children. We have a strong Career & Technology program at our one and only high school. And we are making great strides with regard to STEM education. We are encouraged to see space for growth in these areas and more as part of the preliminary findings of the commission.

Our concerns lie in funding these lofty goals. Kent County has a high concentration of poverty in our school system. 100% of Kent County's schools meet the criteria of high poverty concentration. Over 50% of our students are eligible for or receive FARM assistance. Every school is a Title I school.

The last few years our schools have cut staff, closed buildings, and implemented myriad efficiencies to continue to provide the same level of education in the classroom. Any additional cuts are going to affect learning. Our district is funded by our local county commission at the same overall level as it was 10 years ago. We are bleeding students due to lack of resources, which leads to less per-pupil funding. The problem feeds itself.

Our first concern is that this commission will not act fast enough to help us. Kent County's politicians have made it clear that they do not have the will to prioritize education. They apply only 37% of our expenditures toward education, versus a state average across other counties that hovers around 50% annually. Families with children in Kent County are a small voting block and an overall poor one. Without outside intervention by the state, our local government will not do more for our children and our schools.

In the report prepared by Augenblick, Palaich and Associates titled "Final Report of the Study of Adequacy of Funding for Education in Maryland", APA made some

recommendations regarding funding that concern us, as citizens of the smallest district with the least clout.

First, the recommendation to eliminate state minimum funding is concerning. Absent political will locally, it is necessary for the state to safe-guard each child's right to a good education. While the current funding formula is largely at play in our current funding problems, a balance must be struck. When putting together your funding formula, we ask that you consider our particular difficulty of high concentrations of poverty.

Second, on page 107 of the APA report, the second paragraph ends with the following concerning statement: "Three counties, Kent, Talbot, and Worcester, would lose all of their state aid due to the recommendations for required local shares, the elimination of minimum state aid amounts, and changes in the local wealth calculation." We believe if the commission were to act on this recommendation, the end result would be devastating to both Kent County Public Schools and Kent County's overall economy. We ask that you keep in mind the problems that come within a community that does not have economy of scale, and that cannot leverage the purchasing power that larger districts can when negotiating for goods and services.

On behalf of Support Our Schools and parents of Kent County's public school children, I thank you for your time and consideration. We would also ask you to visit Kent County to see for yourself what has been accomplished on a shoestring budget, and how precariously we are dependent on your recommendation to move us forward.



*A Champion for Students*

Diana L. Mitchell, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

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**October 25, 2017**

## COMMISSION ON INNOVATION AND EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION PUBLIC HEARING LARGO HIGH SCHOOL OCTOBER 25, 2017

**Good Evening** Chairman Kirwan, Commissioners, and guests.

My name is **Diana Mitchell** and I am the Superintendent of Schools of **Dorchester County**. I would like to thank my colleagues for supporting DCPS in coming out this evening:

**I am pleased to be here** this evening to talk about our public-school system. I want to personally thank you for your commitment, dedication, and the time you have devoted to reviewing the highest performing education systems nationally and internationally.

**I would be remiss** if I didn't begin by telling you a little about my system. We have 4,787 students nestled on the Eastern Shore in Dorchester County. Of which:

67% receive Free and Reduced Meals,  
9% receive Special Education Services, and  
4% students are English language learners.

**In our most recent kindergarten classes**, 42% of students entered kindergarten ready to learn. We employ 519 professionals to educate our students and we provide professional development throughout the year for all employees.

**Many of the students** who are currently entering our systems are coming to school with significant disadvantages that were not factors more than two decades ago. Today, we are seeing an increase in drug addicted babies who are entering our classrooms, parents who themselves may be addicted to drugs and alcohol, and parents who are working two jobs to make ends meet. We are also seeing a growing decrease in parental involvement in our schools, which we are diligently working to improve. Providing educational services in the 21st century is vastly different than two decades ago. We support the Commission's recommendation to provide more funding for early childhood education, wrap-around social services, and extra teachers for disadvantaged students.

**In coming before you** this evening, I want to ensure you that as superintendents, we are dedicated to delivering the highest quality instruction in our public schools by focusing on rigorous standards for every single student. We are committed to providing innovative programs to prepare our students to be college or career-ready.

**This is the first school year** we are offering transition courses to help our students who have lagged behind. We are placing a high priority on our career technology education programs to offer our students many options during their high school years. We welcome the recommendation of the new 10th grade target for college and career readiness, which will allow two additional years of support for students having trouble reaching that goal. We believe multiple measures should be used to determine college and career readiness.

Investing more funds in the next generation of workers is investing in Maryland's future.

**As a Commission**, as you begin reviewing your recommendations as listed in your Vision for a World Class School System, we want to remind you of the diversity of Maryland's public-school systems. From a fiscal standpoint, local governments contribute vastly different percentages of funding to their local school systems. We believe many of the policy issues you are recommending should remain under the purview of local board policy decision-making. One size may not fit all in terms of local school and district education needs and policies. For example, a mandate to increase class size would be extremely difficult for school systems with large number of special education students. Class size is a critical issue that should remain under the jurisdiction of the local school board.

**Included in the Commission's vision and recommendations** are several major changes to the teaching profession, which we support theoretically. Maryland has been an import state when it comes to hiring teachers. We hire approximately 6,000 new teachers a year and approximately 2,700 graduated from a Maryland college or university. Many systems have difficulty filling these positions, especially in critical shortage areas and especially on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Providing teachers more collaborative planning time will result in the need to hire more teachers for coverage. Offering teachers more compensation may indeed keep teachers in the profession for longer periods of time. However, making it harder to get into Maryland's teacher education programs may exacerbate our importing of more teachers. We have found that many of our Institutions of Higher Education in Maryland are not even offering a maximum number of teacher education slots. The teacher shortage issue has become a crisis situation.

**Finally, we are very interested** in reviewing and helping with the development of a new school finance system in Maryland. We strongly believe in accountability as defined in the original Thornton Commission Report. We believe that school funding should ensure that all Maryland students are provided an excellent and equitable education. We encourage the Commission to further address some of the funding statutory requirements as stated in the original charges to the Commission.

**We realize that as Commissioners you have a very heavy lift.** As such, we feel that the December 2017 timeline may not be sufficient time to finalize many of the recommendations in the Vision Document. As we deal with the increasing needs and diversity of our public-school students, we would welcome the opportunity to continue to work with you to ensure that all of our students have the same access to a high quality instructional program.

**Thank you for** the opportunity to speak this evening!

Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education  
Testimony of Melissa McKenna  
October 25, 2017

Thank you Chairman Kirwan and Commissioners for the opportunity to speak here today. My name is Melissa McKenna and I am a proud parent of a Maryland public school student and happily retired PTA leader.

In preparing this testimony, I poured over hundreds of pages of pertinent materials, especially the Study of Adequacy Funding, which gave me the most concern. Seeing as how there is not one county with a prototypical school system size of 12,000 students, I see their recommendations as a nice case study yet not particularly instructive. There are too many counties that fall at the extremes: six of our counties have a mere 18%-47% of that enrollment and three counties have a whopping nine to thirteen times the recommended size. The attempt to find a starting place is appreciated, however, one size rarely fits all and could have deleterious effects at both ends of the spectrum.

Also of note is the fact the Study used two-year old data now obsolete for counties with either declining or rapidly increasing student enrollment. Please also apply the measurements equally by using a standard snapshot enrollment number from the current school year. A three-year enrollment average, while attempting to lessen the sting of funding cuts, does no one any favors in the long run.

The bottom line is our children in Maryland need your help. I have seen this first hand and is why I am grateful for this commission. More students are entering school with greater needs than ever - from special education and English language learning support to additional staff and resources for students receiving free and reduced price meals (FRPM). These kids, our kids, need your H-E-L-P!

I have three appeals to make to you today.

First, regardless of formula or "wealth equalization," please recommend maintaining or increasing funding for districts with increasing enrollment.

In a perfect world of limitless resources, more funding across the board is what is required. Yes, the state has increased funding to public education, however, it is not enough to keep up with increased needs, much less increased enrollment growth in our largest three counties. More children usually means higher expenses and a greater share of the budget. We cannot continue the trend of minimal increases in the face of critical needs, cost increases, and increase in the total number of students in our state.

Second, regardless of formula or "wealth equalization" chosen, please maintain or augment funding for special education, English language learning support, and support for low-income students. A decrease would be a disaster. Our children only get one shot at each grade. They need the best from their schools and state, and all of us - advocates and electeds, professional educators and community - every year.

Which brings me to the third point, the earlier the better. Early childhood education is so important. The earlier the investment is made the less time, effort, and money will be required to make up ground later. According to a December 2014 FACT SHEET from The White House Summit on Early Childhood Education: Existing research suggests expanding early learning initiatives could provide benefits to society of roughly \$8.60 for every \$1 spent, about half of which comes from increased earnings for children when they are working adults.

What a return on investment! And while the dollar figure is impressive, the brighter future it provides our children in general should be our guidestar. Please consider a comprehensive state-wide plan for pre-K education that is a partnership of public and private providers and the business community. Yes, funding teachers and resources is very important. Also important are facilities needed to house these programs on a large scale. Commensurate increases to the capital education budget will be necessary.

For our state to remain a leader in public education and all endeavors, we need to invest in our most precious and important resource: our children. The eager faces and inquisitive young minds behind those numbers are counting on us. Thank you again for affording me this opportunity to address you today and for all your work on behalf of our kids.

Thank you.

Melissa McKenna  
melmckenna@utexas.edu

Testimony to the Kirwan Commission – October 25, 2017  
by Denny Gulick, Professor of Mathematics, UMD

Good evening. I have taught mathematics for a long time at the University of Maryland. In my short talk I would like to call to your attention a few practices in some Maryland school districts that are quite worrisome to college mathematics teachers.

1. Apparently, in some districts, students can earn 50% of the points (like 50 out of 100 points) simply by turning in an assignment or an exam. This practice diminishes the value of student effort, if the first 50 points can be essentially unearned.
2. In many districts, students are given the chance to retake 1 or more exams in a class during the grading period, with the makeup exam grade replacing the original grade.
3. In some districts, there is a practice of requiring quarter-final examinations, but not semester final examinations.
4. Also, in some districts there appears to be a substantial reduction in assigned homework for all students.
5. Finally, students have reported to me that they have been told that they don't need to remember concepts or facts because of the Internet and because cell phones are everywhere.

Members of the Maryland Statewide Mathematics Group, of which I am the chair, have very substantial worries about each of the items mentioned above, and the consequences for students when they go to college. These practices seriously affect students' success in college because they hinder students developing the habits of mind that serious study requires. We believe that such practices are a disservice to students, and we have had testimonials from current high school mathematics teachers that share our concerns.

I urge that the Commission follow up with school districts to ensure that students who hope to attend post-secondary education are prepared, not just through rigorous content, but also in habits of mind.

Thank you.



Testimony of Tom Dillon, Co-Executive Director

On Behalf of The Literacy Lab

*Before the*

Kirwan Commission

October 25, 2017

Good evening, Dr. Kirwan and members of the Commission. My name is Tom Dillon; I am the Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director of The Literacy Lab, a local nonprofit organization committed to closing the literacy gap for Maryland's children.

During the Baltimore hearing, you had the opportunity to hear from Dr. Slavin about the impact that proven tutoring could have on statewide reading rates. We were thrilled to hear his ambitious yet realistic projections for accelerating achievement for children who are not proficient in basic and necessary skills. I am here to share more about The Literacy Lab's work and impact in the hope that we can support the growth of a statewide strategy for increasing early literacy proficiency.

The Literacy Lab embeds rigorously-trained, full-time early literacy tutors in high-need elementary schools and early childhood classrooms to provide children age 3 to grade 3 at risk of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading failure with proven daily intervention. Our full-time AmeriCorps tutors, each of whom comes with a fully-loaded cost of approximately

\$35,000 per year, help schools implement a Response to Intervention framework by providing additional capacity to reach children who might otherwise fall through the cracks. They receive rigorous training and ongoing coaching, including from staff members whom we train at our partner schools. In addition to implementing daily interventions with children on their caseload, our tutors are trained to administer tri-annual benchmark assessments and collect weekly progress monitoring data, ensuring dynamic response to students' needs and a high degree of accountability to our school partners, who have full access to all of this data in real time.

The reason we believe this is relevant to the Commission is the proven nature of this work at statewide scale. Over a decade ago, the state of Minnesota made an intentional decision to address its literacy achievement gap by developing a research-based and data-driven early literacy intervention model and directing state resources to bring it to scale. Our work in Maryland is a partnership to ensure the precise replication of this nationally-recognized Minnesota Reading Corps model, which places approximately 1,200 full-time tutors across that state providing early literacy intervention to over 30,000 students annually. The model benefits from an extensive evidence base, including a randomized control trial study conducted by the Bethesda-based National Opinion Research Center of the University of Chicago. Additionally, a 2012 study found that the program saved the state \$9 million annually in special education costs, in line with the cost saving projections shared by Dr. Slavin. We believe that with disciplined, targeted, long-term investment, similar scale and outcomes are possible here in Maryland.

The Literacy Lab's Maryland Reading Corps was launched in 2015 with significant financial commitments from Baltimore City Public Schools, the Maryland State Department of Education, and the Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism. In the 2016-17 school year, The Literacy Lab placed 33 full-time tutors in some of Baltimore's most challenging schools. These 33 tutors provided daily service to 686 children at risk of not being ready for Kindergarten or for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading failure. 76% of pre-K students made significant gains in their early literacy Kindergarten readiness, meaning that they walked into their first day of Kindergarten knowing letter names, letter sounds, rhyming, alliteration, and important vocabulary. 72% of Kindergarten participants in Baltimore exceeded the target growth rate, meaning that they are closing their achievement gaps and catching up with their on-grade-level peers. 65% of participating 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, those students at the end of the very critical window of learning to read, exceeded the target reading growth rate. Given Minnesota's experience, we know it is possible to achieve these outcomes statewide.

We realize that achieving Dr. Slavin's vision of a comprehensive Response to Intervention framework meeting the needs of all of Maryland's struggling students will require a robust mix of evidence-based approaches, and we hope that our work can serve as a useful piece of the puzzle. Looking to other states for evidence-based approaches at scale seems like a good place to start, and we are pleased to share with the Commission that just such a model has already taken root in Maryland. Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Testimony of Catherine Carter**  
**before the Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education**  
**SUPPORTING Funding to improve identification of visual impairments in students, especially at-risk populations**  
**such as Special Education**  
**Wednesday, October 25, 2017**

- My name is Catherine Carter. I am a mom, teacher, and visual impairment advocate.

Frederick Douglas said, "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken man." This Commission is about building stronger children; however, we are failing to address one of the strongest predictor of academic performance in school-age children, their vision.

- 80% of learning is visual
- Visual impairment is the most common disability
  - 1 in 4 children are visually impaired
  - 70% of children receiving special ed services
  - 98% of the juvenile delinquents at the Hickey facility
- Lack of understanding that vision is more than 20/20, we are failing to ensure our students can see

### **Vision and Reading**

Today Maryland children are screened for visual acuity or 20/20 eyesight, which only tests for far distance when most schoolwork occurs up close. We don't screen for key visual skills required for reading and studying up close, such as eye focusing, eye tracking and teaming.

- Let me demonstrate how every human being reads.
  - Pretend my two fingers are 2 eyes. The eyes have to do the same thing at the same time for the brain to accurately take in information. For many this doesn't happen.
  - So now you take those teamed eyes and turn them into the converged position required to read.
  - While holding this tight muscular position the eyes now have to track on a line of print. This involves steady eye movements, saccades and fixations.
  - Your peripheral vision processes that you're coming to the end of the line.
  - Then your peripheral vision and a big saccadic hop guides you to the next line.
- If any of this isn't working properly the student can lose their place on the page, fail to remember what they read, see double, get headaches, have letters move on the page.
- This is what was happening to my son Atticus, who was misdiagnosed with ADHD, when actually he struggled with double vision. His visual impairment was not discovered until he was 11 because he always passed the school/pediatrician screenings and a lack of understanding of the signs of visual impairment.

### **The Importance of Vision**

Vision plays an important role in children's physical, cognitive, and social development. Uncorrected vision problems can impair child development, interfere with learning, and even lead to permanent vision loss; early detection and treatment are critical. Visual functioning is a strong predictor of academic performance in school-age children, and vision disorders of childhood may continue to affect health and well-being throughout the adult years.

Many children are going through school without receiving a comprehensive vision evaluation. The only vision care these children receive comes through the form of a vision screener either performed by the health department in specific school years or with their pediatrician well visit checkups. These vision screeners focus on visual acuity, or 20/20 eyesight. They do not address binocular vision deficiencies. As a result, parents are given a false sense of security that their children's vision is perfect, when in fact many children are being missed. Most children with binocular vision deficiencies will have 20/20 eye sight.

Without proper identification, these children are often mislabeled as having Attention Deficit Disorder or a Learning Disability. These children are often placed into Special Education with an incorrect diagnosis. They may spend years

receiving specialized instruction with slow to minimal progress because the true underlying visual condition has not been uncovered.

## Vision is more than 20/20

You may wonder how we have ignored our student's vision, such a foundational piece to learning. Before my state complaint, Maryland schools would only recognize acuity impairment. Students who struggled with double vision, cross, lazy eye, and other non-acuity visual impairments like Atticus were told by schools they were not visually impaired and excluded from vision services.

- Hearing my school telling me that my child who struggled with double vision was not visually impaired because he had 20/20 acuity, made no sense.
- I filed and won a state complaint in 2016, 6 Maryland schools districts were found out of compliance with IDEA, a letter was sent to all Maryland schools from the Maryland Department of Education.
- Seeing this issue nationwide, I contacted the US Department of Education in March 2017. On May 22, 2017, a memorandum was sent to all 50 state directors.
- Now nationwide all visual impairments that impact FAPE are recognized. State laws and districts are being changed and these visually impaired children are finally getting the help they need.
- My legislative advocacy in Annapolis resulted in a Maryland Vision Screening Committee I am on.
- Now I am advocating for policy and legislative change to improve identification of the 1 in 4 children who are visually impaired.

## How to Improve Identification

- Teacher Information
  - Every teacher annually receives information on visual impairments.
  - If expect our teachers to know about blood born pathogens, then we should expect our teachers to understand how common and signs of visual impairment in their students. Teachers need to ensure that their student's vision isn't preventing their learning
- Struggling students
  - The National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health that any children who has an IEP, 504, recommended for an IEP, or RTI-students receiving tiered supported services should have a comprehensive eye exam, not a school vision screening.
  - Provide information on signs of visual impairment to parents and the importance of an eye exam is key to improving the eye exam rates for these at-risk groups.
  - Ensure children are receiving the right accommodations
- Continue and expand the Vision for Baltimore 3-year program
  - Addressing the vision needs in Baltimore are boosting test scores in Baltimore
  - Pursue opportunity to offer free or low-cost exams, using a sliding scale, to students who fail vision screenings and are unable to afford an exam on their own
  - Pursue opportunities to provide geographically accessible opportunities for such examinations

• Just as with physicals form, eye exam forms given to new students (K) + student's parents

Vision is developed and can be lost due to genetics or internal or external brain trauma. 4 out of 5 blindness is preventable. These requests to info and provide resources on vision are simple, cost effective way to solve a treatable vision crisis. I am giving you a solution that will not only help children see clearly but save millions. A New Jersey government study found that New Jersey would save \$200 million in just special education cost if we improved identification of vision impairments

Can you see the board, the paper, do you see double or words move, does reading hurt your eyes or cause headaches? Every parent and teacher should be taught to ask our children. If we expect our children to learn then we should ensure that they can see what we are teaching them.

# VISION & LEARNING

1 in 4 Children are Visually Impaired

A child that sees like this can pass a vision screening.



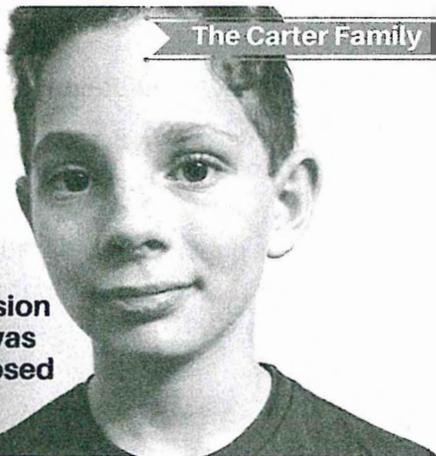
A child that sees like this can pass a vision screening.

A child that sees like this can pass a vision screening.



A child that sees like this can pass a vision screening.

Maybe there's a reason why your child can't sit still for 20 minutes to do schoolwork.



Atticus' vision disorder was misdiagnosed as ADHD

## Atticus has double vision.

HIS EYESIGHT IS 20/20, SO HIS DOUBLE VISION WENT UNDETECTED UNTIL HE WAS ELEVEN YEARS OLD.

Atticus suffered from double vision his whole life, but he thought it was normal. He experienced nausea and vomiting while reading and writing at school. Doctors misdiagnosed him with ADHD due to concentration problems. He had reading and writing dyslexia, headaches, and depression. Through vision rehabilitation and habilitation, Atticus' visual efficiency has improved and his symptoms have lessened. He is off all medication and is a happy child with no signs of depression. Atticus' mother, Catherine Carter, began a campaign to mandate computerized vision screening for school-aged children that will identify visual impairments, beyond acuity. Proper diagnosis of binocular vision disorder or visual processing disorder will save billions of dollars in unnecessary treatment. Her hard work culminated in Maryland's Atticus Act, aimed at helping children see clearly through diagnosis and treatment.

LTSCCAMPAIN@GMAIL.COM

## SIGNS OF VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

- Avoidance of reading; Prefers to be read to
- Short attention span
- Difficulty throwing or catching a ball, copying from a chalkboard or tying their shoes
- Holds books very close to their face
- Moves their head while reading
- Has difficulty making eye contact
- Excessive blinking or eye rubbing
- Requires a finger or ruler for guidance while reading
- Poor spacing between words while writing
- Writes uphill or downhill
- Performing below their potential in school

## SCHOOL VISION SCREENINGS ARE NOT ENOUGH

Parents are often given the false sense of security that their children have perfect vision when they measure to have 20/20 eyesight during their school vision screener. Screenings are simple vision checks only to detect basic vision problems including whether your child may need glasses. A screening does not replace an eye examination, nor does it detect all potential vision disorders that can affect your child's ability to learn in the classroom. To ensure your student can succeed in school and life, your child needs a comprehensive vision exam from an Eye Care Professional. During a comprehensive vision exam, the doctor will look at things a school vision screening will miss, such as how the eyes work together, how they scan and track visual information and whether your child's eyes are focusing correctly.

(ThinkAboutYourEyes.com)



## CHILDREN WHO FIT INTO ONE OF THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES SHOULD RECEIVE A COMPREHENSIVE EYE EXAMINATION

- Children who fail to pass the vision screening
- Children with readily recognized eye abnormalities
- Children with systemic diseases or using medications known to cause eye disorders
- Children with a family history of a first-degree relative with strabismus or amblyopia
- Children born prematurely at less than 32 weeks of gestation
- Children with a diagnosed neurological delay
- Children with a history of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Children who have an IEP, 504, or recommended for an IEP (RTI-students receiving tiered supported services)
- Children who have a diagnosis status of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADD, ADHD)
- Children who have teacher concerns of a vision problem

Patient Age	Eye Examination Interval	
	Asymptomatic/ Risk free	Symptomatic/ At Risk
Birth-24 months	At 6 months	By 6 months of age or as recommended
2-5 yrs	At 3 years of age	At 3 years of age or as recommended
6-18 yrs	Before first grade and every 2 years thereafter	Annually or as recommended
18-60 yrs	Every 2 years	Every 1 to 2 years as recommended
61-older	Annually	Annually or as recommended



## COMMON VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

**Convergence insufficiency-** The inability of the eyes to turn inwards while focusing on a nearpoint target. Many who experience this, work extra hard to turn their eyes inward to eliminate double or blurred vision, which can not only cause eyestrain and headaches but also: poor concentration, poor comprehension, tendency to lose place, and words seemingly float or jump around. (thecenterforvision.com)

**Amblyopia-** Often described as 'lazy eye'; a condition where one eye fails to see clearly, process spatial information, or function as well as the fellow eye. Due to reduced clarity of one eye, the brain will often 'shut off' or suppress the vision from the affected eye. As a result, depth perception or 3/D vision is often reduced or significantly impaired. If left untreated, amblyopia can lead to permanent vision loss.

**Strabismus -** A misalignment of the eye where the eye may turn in, out, up or down as compared to the normally fixating eye. Misalignments of the eyes often cause double vision, or reduced depth perception. It can also lead to the formation of amblyopia. Integration of the eyes, or binocular viewing, is assessed during a comprehensive vision evaluation.

**Oculomotor Dysfunction from Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) -** Eye movements deficiencies often cause difficulties with reading and writing as the eyes struggle to accurately fixate, scan and jump from word to word. Approximately 75% of TBI patients experiences adverse changes with their visual system following a concussion or penetrating head injury. Common visual symptoms including blurred vision, persistent headaches and sensitivity to light, can have a significant impact on quality of life and the rehabilitative process. (Vision Center of Excellence).

Disclaimer: The information contained in this fact sheet is not intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice, it is provided for educational purposes only. You assume full responsibility for how you choose to use this information. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified healthcare provider before starting any new treatment or discontinuing an existing treatment. Talk with your child's vision care provider about any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. Nothing contained in these topics is intended to be used for medical diagnosis or treatment.

# CHILDREN'S VISION AND EYE HEALTH: A Snapshot of Current National Issues

For the full report, please visit: <http://nationalcenter.preventblindness.org/childrens-vision-and-eye-health>

## Importance of Healthy Vision for Children

Vision plays an important role in children's physical, cognitive, and social development. More than one in 20 preschool-age children and one in four school-age children have a vision disorder. Uncorrected vision problems can impair child development, interfere with learning, and even lead to permanent vision loss; early detection and treatment are critical. Visual functioning is a strong predictor of academic performance in school-age children, and vision disorders of childhood may continue to affect health and well-being throughout the adult years.

**The economic costs of children's vision disorders are significant, amounting to \$10 billion yearly in the United States.**

## Prevalence and Impact of Vision Disorders in U.S. Children

- Nearly 3 percent of children younger than 18 years are blind or visually impaired.
- Amblyopia (sometimes called "lazy eye"), found in about 2 percent of 6- to 72-month-old children, is the most common cause of vision loss in children.
- Between 2 and 4 percent of children under the age of 6 years have strabismus.
- The most common vision disorders in children are refractive errors—myopia, hyperopia, and astigmatism.

## Risk Factors for Vision Problems in Children

Both genetic and environmental factors play a role in the development of vision disorders. Family history is a risk factor for some vision disorders such as refractive error, as is premature birth. The presence of some vision disorders increases the likelihood of developing other vision disorders, such as strabismus and amblyopia. A number of neurodevelopmental disorders (e.g., cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism spectrum disorders, hearing impairment and speech delay) also are associated with higher rates of vision problems. The most significant preventable risk factor for visual disorders in children is maternal smoking. Children of women who smoked cigarettes during pregnancy have higher rates of strabismus, hyperopia, and astigmatism.

## Access to Care

Too many children with vision disorders have unmet needs for care, leaving them vulnerable to negative effects on learning and development. Racial and socioeconomic inequities in access to care are evident across a variety of measures and studies.



AT PREVENT BLINDNESS



- Nearly one in four (24%) adolescents with correctable refractive error has inadequate correction.
- An estimated 6 percent of children with special health care needs (CSHCN) have unmet vision care needs.
- 14 percent had gone without needed new or replacement eyeglasses within the last year because their parents could not afford the cost.
- Nationally, only one-quarter of employees of private sector businesses have access to vision benefits through their employers.

## Screening and Intervention

- Only 16 U.S. states require vision screening for preschool-age children. Few states specify vision screening protocols, and screening methods vary widely from state to state. Additionally, all Head Start and Early Head Start programs are required to have a record of a vision screening completed for all enrollees within 45 days of entry. However, there is no national protocol for conducting these screenings.
- Early detection and intervention for vision problems are incorporated into national goals and health care standards. The Healthy People 2020 Objective V-1 is to “increase the proportion of preschool children aged 5 years and under who receive vision screening.” The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends vision screening at least once between the ages of 3 and 5 years.
- Due to the time-sensitive nature of amblyopia treatment, vision screening for preschool-age children is considered a cost effective investment. An analysis of the costs and outcomes of three screening scenarios found all three to be cost effective given a “willingness to pay” by policymakers of \$4,000 to \$10,500 for each case of visual loss prevented.
- Healthy People 2020 uses the 2008 National Health Interview Survey for baseline data on vision screening. In that survey, 40 percent of children age 5 years and younger had ever had their “vision tested by a doctor or other health professional.” This estimate is consistent with the 2011 National Survey of Children’s Health, which found that 40 percent of children age 5 years and younger had ever had their vision tested.

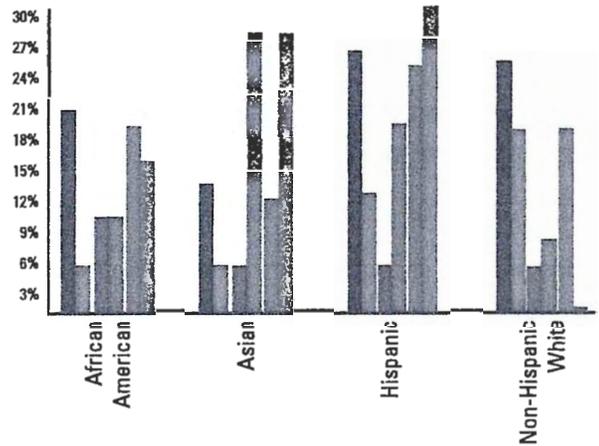
## Creating Effective State Systems for Children’s Vision

State advocates and program and policy decision makers have multiple “entry points” to the system of services affecting children’s vision and eye health. Actions that strengthen screening protocols, improve access to diagnostic exams and treatment, and bolster capacity for surveillance and performance measurement all contribute to the development and support of a comprehensive approach. These actions could include:

- Examining existing data to identify geographic, socioeconomic, and racial disparities in access to services and outcomes.
- Identifying gaps in data capacity.
- Clarifying existing state mandates, protocols, and guidelines for vision screening, and gauging the uniformity of their application across jurisdictions and the degree to which they align with current standards of practice.
- Convening stakeholders for priority setting and planning.

### Prevalence of myopia, hyperopia, and astigmatism by race/ethnicity in U.S. children 6-72 months of age

### Prevalence of myopia, hyperopia, and astigmatism by race/ethnicity in U.S. children ages 5-17 years



### Percent screened by insurance coverage

Public insurance (such as Medicaid/SCHIP)	63%
Private health insurance	72%
Uninsured at time of survey	58%

### Percent screened by race/ethnicity

Hispanic	57%
White, non-Hispanic	72%
Black, non-Hispanic	71%
All other, non-Hispanic*	65%

## Maryland Cost Savings for Identifying Visual Impairments

Savings in Dollars		Childr
Maryland students (K-12) receiving special ed services	294,272	MINIMUM 2,944 CHILDREN
Average cost per child/per year for special ed services <a href="http://www.nea.org/home/19029.htm">http://www.nea.org/home/19029.htm</a>	\$9,369	
Maryland 2015 special education total funds <a href="http://www.dhm.maryland.gov/budget/Documents/operbudget2015/highlights.pdf">http://www.dhm.maryland.gov/budget/Documents/operbudget2015/highlights.pdf</a>	\$405,053,968	
% of IEP students shown to have vision impairment <a href="https://www.oepf.org/sites/default/files/23_4_WALLLINE_CARDER.pdf">https://www.oepf.org/sites/default/files/23_4_WALLLINE_CARDER.pdf</a>	69%	
<b>Savings if vision screenings/training removes or reduces special education services:</b>		
<b>1%</b>	<b>\$4 MILLION</b>	
<b>5%</b>	<b>\$20 MILLION</b>	
<b>10%</b>	<b>\$40 MILLION</b>	
<b>Offenders</b>		
Maryland 2015 juvenile complaints <a href="http://dis.maryland.gov/Documents/2015_Full_DRG_revised_Nov_2016.pdf">http://dis.maryland.gov/Documents/2015_Full_DRG_revised_Nov_2016.pdf</a>	23,446	
Maryland 2015 juveniles committed to DJS	928	
Cost per youth/total/per year <a href="http://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/01glance/html/criminal.html#juvenile">http://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/01glance/html/criminal.html#juvenile</a>	\$38,360 \$35,596,080	MINIMUM 93 YOUNG
Maryland 2015 State-operated Facility Expenditures	\$119,631,271	
% youth offenders shown to have vision impairments	98%	
<b>Savings if vision screenings identify visual impairments for at risk kids, decreasing incarceration rates:</b>		
<b>10%</b>	<b>\$3.6 MILLION</b>	
<b>20%</b>	<b>\$9.2 MILLION</b>	
<b>30%</b>	<b>\$13.8 MILLION</b>	

### Needs Children

University study

of the 179 that required treatment, the children with IEPs ...

and with treatable vision problems did pass the vision screening because problem did not affect their distant

[sites/default/files/23\\_4\\_WALLLINE\\_CARDER.pdf](https://www.oepf.org/sites/default/files/23_4_WALLLINE_CARDER.pdf)

ATION %

4 -8%  
2 - 8%

13%

Efficiency

[nlin.nih.gov/pubmed/10498006?doort=Abstract&from=fulltext](http://nlin.nih.gov/pubmed/10498006?doort=Abstract&from=fulltext)  
[og/sites/default/files/01\\_%20The%20Efficacy%20of%20Vision%20Therapy%20AOA.pdf](https://www.oepf.org/sites/default/files/01_%20The%20Efficacy%20of%20Vision%20Therapy%20AOA.pdf)

### Offenders

and Study

tion of juvenile delinquents tested at

l. Hickey, Jr. School in Baltimore

land demonstrates that visual impairment is prevalent in slightly over 98% of the population”

[tes/default/files/Juvenile%20Delinquents%20Paul](https://www.oepf.org/sites/default/files/Juvenile%20Delinquents%20Paul)

## Summary of Findings <sup>1</sup> – 2006 New Jersey Study <sup>2</sup>

### REPORT:

- This report is the first in a series on the topic of Special Education Reform from the Commission on Business Efficiency in the Public Schools; which was created in 1979 by the New Jersey Legislature.
- This report, published in the Spring of 2006, focuses on the impact of the quality of reading education as it relates to the classification (or misclassification) of certain students as requiring/receiving special education services.
- One "inescapable conclusion is that children with reading difficulties who do not receive intervention services are much more likely to be classified as requiring special education than those students with reading difficulties who receive such services."
- Studies show "a high occurrence of undiagnosed or untreated visual problems among special education students as well as among the adult illiterate."
- "Undiagnosed and untreated vision related learning problems are significant contributors to early reading difficulties and ultimately to special education classification."
- Few students return to full-time general education once classified in special education.
- Special education services cost a significant amount of money. For the 2003 – 2004 school year, New Jersey spent \$4,500/student on approximately 200,000 special education students – for a total of \$900 million.
- **The Commission found that if students were provided with appropriate early intervention reading assistance and follow-up, including early intervention for those children with undiagnosed or untreated vision problems, the state would eventually save 1) \$200 million/year in special education aid costs, and 2) the rescued lives of thousands of children each year.**

### COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The State should provide funding for, and implement reading screenings and appropriate early intervention and follow-up, as well as improving educators skills in identifying and assisting students with reading difficulties.
- **"The Legislature should require that children present a vision examination certificate signed by an ophthalmologist, optometrist or qualified physician prior to entry into a public school.** The report must include the results of a vision examination performed within six months prior the time that a three (3), four (4), five (5), or six (6) year old child is enrolled in a public school, public preschool, or Head Start program. The examination must include measurement of visual acuity in each eye at various distances; assessment of ocular motility and alignment, including eye tracking; strabismus and measurement of actual refractive error; binocular fusion abnormalities; and evaluation of general ocular health, including external assessment."

<sup>1</sup> Summary prepared by the State Government Relations Center of the American Optometric Association.

<sup>2</sup> "Individual Supportive Education Reform Agenda for New Jersey Reading," Spring 2006, New Jersey Commission on Business Efficiency of the Public Schools: <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/committees/buseffps.asp>.



Getty Images

**WHAT WORKS**

## **How Free Eyeglasses Are Boosting Test Scores in Baltimore**

Educators know that poor kids do worse in school. The solution might be as simple as helping them see the board.

By SARAH GAMARD | August 17, 2017

**T**hree years ago, Johns Hopkins University researchers in Baltimore asked a seemingly simple straightforward question: Could the persistent gap in reading performance between poor students and wealthier ones be closed if they gave the poor students eyeglasses?

They knew that poorer students were less likely to have glasses than wealthier white children, but data were limited on whether simply helping children better focus on the page in front of them might improve their ability to master a skill essential for early learning. They screened several hundred second- and third-graders, gave two pairs of eyeglasses to the ones who needed them (about 60 percent of the group, based on a uniquely liberal prescribing standard) and then they tracked their school performance over the course of the year. The outcomes were notable even with the small sample size—reading proficiency improved significantly compared with the children who did not need eyeglasses. In late 2015, a conversation between Dr. Leana Wen, the new Baltimore City health commissioner, and Johns Hopkins President Ronald Daniels about areas of potential collaboration quickly focused on students' eyesight. Vision screening by the health department had already identified an unmet need for thousands of children; the research seemed to confirm the value of addressing it in the school setting.

In May 2016, the Baltimore Health Department assembled a public-private coalition made up of the city's public school system, Johns Hopkins Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins School of Education, eyeglass retailer Warby Parker, and a national nonprofit called Vision To Learn.

The three-year program, called Vision for Baltimore, plans to visit 150 schools over the course of the study and screen 60,000 students, making it the biggest study of its kind. The data officials expect to glean could radically alter how school systems across the country approach one of the most difficult and consequential problems in modern education. It may well be that the solution to the persistent gap in reading proficiency is not instructional, but a simple health issue that could be addressed with a pair eyeglasses that could cost a couple of hundred dollars at the mall.

"We know, based on common sense, that giving glasses for kids is important for education [and] health," said Dr. Wen.

As of mid-August, Vision for Baltimore has performed nearly 18,000 screenings and distributed nearly 2,000 pairs of glasses for free. That's on schedule of the program's

goal to give out 8,000 glasses before the end of the study. They estimate that just 20 percent of screened children who need glasses subsequently get them, leaving as many as 20,000 children citywide staring fuzzily at the board in their classrooms.

Experts attribute the glasses gap to Maryland law, which requires screening only or pre-K, first-and eighth-graders. A child who develops eyesight issues in second grade could wait years before being examined again, falling further behind peers. But even with mandatory screening, parents may not follow through. Parents might not be able to afford the glasses if they don't qualify for Medicaid. (Maryland's Medicaid system covers one pair of eyeglasses for minors per year, and will replace them in some cases.) The consequences of not addressing eyesight problems early can be dire and compounding. Studies over the past decade suggest that students who perform badly in school are misdiagnosed with behavioral disorders or special education needs when the culprit was their poor eyesight.

The solution was deceptively simple: If kids can't get to the doctor, bring the doctor to the kids. Under the Vision for Baltimore program, a mobile clinic shows up to the school for about a week during the school year to determine whether a child may need glasses. In Baltimore, the city health department conducts the screening, which requires checking distance vision, depth perception and eye alignment. If the child fails the screening test, he is given a parental consent form for an optometry exam on the school campus. Two weeks later, an optician comes to the school to fit the glasses, which the child picks himself. Each student gets one pair.

Shandra Worthy-Owens, principal of Dr. Bernard Harris Sr. Elementary School, said V4B has been a success at her school. The project clinicians communicated weekly to make sure the school had the necessary forms and knew when the clinic would arrive on campus for screenings. "They just supported us throughout the whole process," Worthy-Owens said. Her school staff conducted home visits, made extra phone calls and stayed late on campus to accommodate with parents' work schedules.

About 100 students, a fourth of Worthy-Owens' school's total, received the glasses in March. Though there are no hard data yet on reading proficiency, Worthy-Owens said teachers at her school have noticed those students who received and regularly wear glasses from V4B have improved in the classroom. The glasses have even boosted student self-esteem: Her school spotlights the students for wearing their glasses on a bulletin board, she said, and none of them have been bullied. She attributes this to the way they promote the "coolness" of wearing them.

But the program still has to overcome a lack of cooperation from some parents, who often fail to fill out necessary paperwork. Families can provide a Medicaid number to cover the cost of the exam, for example, but many do not, or the number comes back wrong or illegible. The cost is covered with or without a Medicaid number, but Worthy-Owens said some parents did not want their children to get glasses even after they were identified, either because they fear the cost or resist revealing other personal information to the school. “Trust was an issue,” she said. “You have to have the relationship with the community in order for the consent process to work.” Worthy-Owens said she often has to persuade reluctant parents to fill out the one-page consent form, which asks for the child’s name, gender, birthdate, address, school and Medicaid identification number, as well as the parents’ names and phone number. Next year, the form will not ask for a Medicaid number so fewer parents will hesitate to turn it in. If the program can’t overcome hurdles like these, says Bob Slavin, who leads Johns Hopkins center for education reform, Vision for Baltimore doesn’t “have a prayer” of getting anywhere near its goal of reaching 20,000 in-need children.

The project is expensive and relies on philanthropy. Vision To Learn pays about \$100 per child in each community—this covers each area’s mobile clinic, eyeglasses, vision tests, directors’ oversight and optometry team. The mobile clinic alone costs around \$115,000—\$100,000 to buy and renovate the van and \$15,000 for medical equipment. The nonprofit receives revenue from insurance reimbursement and private donations. Baltimore’s health department pays \$250,000 annually in salaries for its three screeners and office staff. The research team meets their own costs from donations and grants.

“When the kids are wearing glasses and they’re doing better, the attendance is higher, and the standardized test scores have improved, then you can really make the argument for why this needs to be built into what schools do,” said Megan Collins, a lead researcher in the study.

“We all know the need is there,” said Austin Beutner, chairman and founder of Vision To Learn. “We have a lot to come, not only in Baltimore.”



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO



HEALTHY  
CHICAGO

CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 2, 2014

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**MAYOR EMANUEL VISITS STUDENTS RECEIVING FREE VISION EXAMS AT SUMNER  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

*City of Chicago's 2013 and 2014 Budgets Provided \$3 Million in Funding for School-Based Eye  
Examinations to Help Students Focus and Excel in the Classroom.*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel visited Sumner Elementary School today to meet with students receiving eye examinations. The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and Department of Public Health (CDPH) vision exam program is projected to provide 45,000 students with eye exams by the end of the year.

"A City's budget is a reflection of a City's values, and Chicago's budget clearly reflects that we value the health and well-being of all students in our city," said Mayor Emanuel. "By allocating resources in our budget to expand the Chicago Public Schools vision program, we are ensuring students throughout the City will be able to see their computer screens and blackboards as well as also look forward to a career and a bright future."

The 2014 city budget invested additional funds to expand its school-based vision program to serve 45,000 CPS students, a fifty percent increase over 2013. With the additional funding, the total City sponsorship behind the program totals 3 million dollars. In 2013, the City first invested one million dollars in the program to provide eye exams and eyeglasses, at no cost to the families, for 30,000 CPS students.

Parents of more than 30,000 Kindergarteners are required by state law to obtain a vision exam for their children by October 15th, and to report this screening to their schools. However during fiscal year 2012 (FY12), only 11 percent of parents reported getting their child's eyes exam. The City recognized a need and prioritized funding to ensure students are completing eye exams.

This vision program will also increase access for students who have failed their vision screening in the past, as well as those required to have a vision exam, and those referred by a teacher or parent. Students who have failed their vision screenings in the past, pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and first grade students will be the target populations for the new vision program that will provide proper eye exams and then when needed glasses.

Vision is a critical factor in a child's education as more than 80 percent of a child's learning occurs visually, according to the United States Department of Labor. The school-based vision program delivers on-site comprehensive vision exams and eye glasses to students in need of vision correction. The eye glasses are ordered using the Medicaid system and are made of the same materials as those made available to insured students. If a student needs glasses, immediately

121 NORTH LASALLE STREET, ROOM 507, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60602

following the exam, the child can make a selection from a minimum of 15 different frames and the glasses are delivered within 10-12 weeks of the exam date. The vision program works with parents to provide written and oral eye care information and education, making referrals if necessary.

CDPH is committed to increasing access to health services for students through working in partnership with the Chicago Public Schools. During the 2012-2013 school year, 174,860 students were provided one or more vision screenings by CPS Audiometric and Vision Screening Technicians. A total of 37,535 students were referred to an optometrist for a comprehensive eye exam, but most students do not follow-through due to lack of information, limited access, or limited resources. With the City of Chicago's sponsorship behind the school based vision program thousands of students will receive the proper vision care.

###

Photo Credit: Brooke Collins // City of Chicago

Photo Caption: Mayor Emanuel visits with students receiving free vision exams at Sumner Elementary school

Testimony

ADELINE J. WILCOX  
10901 Fleetwood Dr  
Beltsville MD  
25 October 2017

COMMISSION ON INNOVATION AND EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

William E. Kirwan, Chair

Two Topics

1. Failings of Maryland education seem inescapable. Recently, I asked my 10th grade student at a private high school in Prince George's County if anyone in her Honors English class has difficulty reading. Yes, a classmate could not read the word *contemplative*.
2. On May 29th of this year, I downloaded and analyzed FY17 spending data for Prince George's County. I found 12 identical records, each an EDUCATION Agency payment of \$726,481.48 for OTHER MISCELLANEOUS SERVICE. None of the records gave a transaction date.

On June 2nd, I reported my finding to the Office of the State Prosecutor in Towson. State's Attorney Timothy J. Frye handed it to Michele Winston, Director of Internal Audits for Prince George's County Public Schools and Robin Barnes-Shell, Executive Director, Prince George's County Office of Ethics and Accountability.

On June 8th, Michele Winston called me. Seeming ignorant of the spending data set and data analysis in general, she gave me no information. I never heard from her again.

Today, I downloaded the September 5th update of the spending data. I reanalyzed the data. I found 27 identical records of payments of \$726,481.48, for OTHER MISCELLANEOUS SERVICE, amounting to nearly 20 million dollars. Evidently, PGCPS is awash in slush money. Please do not recommend additional funding for PGCPS.

Good evening,

My name is Monique Klaus Bourque and I am here tonight as a parent of a child with Down syndrome and a hearing loss in the State of Maryland public school system, as well as representing the Maryland Down syndrome Advocacy Coalition (MDAC), which represents individuals with Down syndrome and their families from across the state.

As a parent of a child with a disability, it is clear to me that all children, in including my child, must have a strong educational and emotional foundation to support them in obtaining competitive integrated employment and ultimately achieving an independent life with minimal support. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) promises all students with disabilities a free, appropriate public education (FAPE). IDEA requires a student to be educated in a general education classroom if he/she can receive a satisfactory education in that setting with supplementary aids and services. In addition, the purpose of the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), as stated in Title I is to provide ALL children with a significant opportunity for a fair equitable and high quality education and close educational achievement acts. Maryland must at least meet the requirements of FAPE and ESSA, but should also strive to go beyond the status quo and work to meet the full promise and intent of these civil rights laws.

Unfortunately, even after 13 years and with the support of IDEA and now ESSA, families are too often told by their local neighborhood schools and the district special education schools that they either:

- a) Do not have the resources to provide the services and supports that students with disabilities need for their education (even though they are legally required to provide these services and supports), or
- b) The resources they do offer are spread so thin as to dilute the impact (i.e. once a month visit for a hearing impaired student in a CRI class with no total communications or sign language fluency options).

As a result, parents and educators must “make do” with what they have and supplement with outside services (if they are fortunate to have a decent health insurance plan).

The needs of students with and without disabilities cover a wide range. Even among students with Down syndrome there is a great deal of variability in abilities and challenges. However, many students with Down syndrome need supplementary aids and services such as paraeducator support, assistive technology, adapted materials, assignment modification, support for social skills and communication, and training for personnel. Some also need behavioral supports and augmentative communication systems. Without these supports their educational rights are not met. Very often students with Down syndrome are segregated from their nondisabled peers and sent to schools where there are separate “programs” because their neighborhood schools claim they do not have sufficient resources to meet the students’ needs. Persistent low expectations are inherent in the decisions to

segregate these students and deny them the supports and services needed for a high quality education.

Children with Down syndrome are too often removed from the typical developing classroom where they benefit the most educationally and behaviorally. Like most typically developing children, our children are visual learners and need to follow the example they "see". Rather, the school system is advising families of children with disabilities to bus their child to another school (sometimes hours in a bus each way to reach the few specialist resources) and then the parents are asked to decide at an early age whether their child will receive a high school diploma or not.

In addition to this forced segregation, a parent with a child who has a disability feels isolation for their child. My daughter is two blocks from a neighborhood school, University Park. This is a walking community by the University of Maryland of about 1,000 homes. There is a wonderful park in the neighborhood, a local boys and girls sports program, and countless other resources for kids within walking distance.. Unfortunately, there are few resources there to support children with disabilities. My daughter was not allowed to attend the neighborhood school and make the typical friendships with her neighborhood friends. When she was three, she was bused two hours each way to Thomas Claggett in District Heights, MD to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program. My daughter also has a loss of hearing. The local Francis Fuchs Early Childhood Learning center did not offer sign language in the classroom, (despite the benefit of sign language for all children at an early age). While the team at Thomas Claggett was amazing, they were very few in numbers. My daughter did flourish. She then moved to Andrew Jackson Academy in Suitland for Kindergarten and we had to fight for several months to have her transportation route changed so she was not on the bus for three hours every afternoon. After she was placed in a make shift classroom (formally the equipment room) with no windows, no bathroom and a broken HVAC overhead and she was shutting down and no longer talking or signing, we had her moved to the CRI class at Springhill Lake. While this has been her home since (she is in 4<sup>th</sup> grade) and we are very pleased with the team, we had to decide to move Renee out of a diploma track at Andrew Jackson to a non-diploma CRI class at Springhill Lake ES.

So rather than allowing her to go to her neighborhood school, make friends and get extra supports there, she is being bused to a school with a class of kids with a multitude of issues and she is not necessarily any better or worse. However, I can tell you that the neighborhood kids don't recognize her and so are hesitant to engage with her and the birthday party invites stopped a long time ago....

From my perspective, it seems we are missing a critical education opportunity, that of your peers. By segregating or isolating children with disabilities, we are perpetuating the existing system that is highly dependent on supports. We are telling our children to separate out children with disabilities from the "normal" kids. We are missing opportunities to educate all children on empathy, compassion, leadership, problem solving, innovation, etc.

The Commission should consider some **simple but bold changes** and approaches to an education system that fully embodies FAPE. Like other federal and state governments, the Commission should look to shift resources back to the local schools and train existing educators on educating “all children”. Even though the Maryland regulations on implementing Universal Design for Learning have been in effect since the 2014-15 school year, many schools are not using this important educational framework that benefits all students. The Commission may want to look at other states with proven approaches for educating in the general education classroom and ideally, implementing any changes consistently across the county schools to provide this approach. For example, perhaps, resources from transportation could be shifted to funding the local resources within the neighborhood schools. Also partnering with local and state universities, and businesses on programs to sponsor/fund classroom support, buddy and work programs. This will help to build a society that will not only better educate a child with disabilities, but all children, who are then future citizens, employers, etc.

In order to more accurately assess the special education funding needs in Maryland, it will be critically important for the Commission to determine the cost of providing the variety of services needed by students with different disabilities, taking into account the wide range of individuals in any disability category. Only then will funding be based on evidence of best practices for students with disabilities. Only then can we hope to raise expectations and fulfill the promises of IDEA and ESSA. MDAC urges the Commission to work with partners in the state, including disability groups, to study these costs. In the meanwhile it is important to add on funding for students with both high incidence and low incidence disabilities so we can begin immediately to improve education for Maryland’s students with disabilities.

**Testimony before the Kirwan Commission on Innovation and Excellence in  
Education on behalf of Montgomery County Public Schools and MCCPTA on how  
we can make our schools better**

Thank you Chair Dr. William Kirwan and members of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education for the opportunity to present testimony this evening. My name is Darwin Romero, and I am a parent of two boys that attend Montgomery County Public Schools, a member of the PTSA, and an advocate for closing the opportunity and achievement gap among our brown and black children. I am here tonight recommending that investments be made in technology, capital improvement projects, and universal pre-kindergarten.

One of the areas that I would like to see state funding increase is in the area of technology. Understanding that we live in an age where information is readily available via our smartphones and electronic devices we need to take advantage of the resources at our fingertips. Many school systems continue to use email, which is relevant, but a better option for our Latino and African American families is texting. A short message can be sent to parents informing them of upcoming events and letting them know how their child is doing academically or to request meetings with parents or guardians.

Another use of technology that we must explore is online courses for high school students. I believe that for our students to be competitive in the workplace of the future, they must be skilled at using technology and have real-life experience. If we can provide online tutoring sessions and courses, I believe this will allow for enriching educational opportunities such as internships and work-study programs.

Many of our students come from low-income families where their only option may be to drop out of school to support themselves and their family. We need to give these students alternatives that will allow them to complete their public education and continue onto higher education or the workforce. I believe a better use of technology will help us accomplish this goal.

Another issue that our school system is experiencing is our aging infrastructure. Montgomery County Public Schools is the largest school district in Maryland serving over 160,000 students. And every year we are adding approximately 2,000 new students. This constant growth in student enrollment brings with it particular challenges that need to be addressed. Many of our students are receiving their public education in portables that are ill-equipped and unsanitary at best. We have a student to teacher ratios that are not conducive to fostering a learning environment, and many of our students fall through the cracks. We request that sufficient funding be allocated for capital improvement projects that take into account historical and projected growth patterns.

Finally, I want to encourage the commission to look at universal pre-kindergarten. Many of the issues our brown and black children experience later in life stem from the widening opportunity and achievement gap. We need to put all children on the same playing field

from birth, and that means increasing Pre-K and Head Start to all day programs. We know that these programs promote school readiness of children under five years of age and even the playing field. We need to acknowledge that our brown and black children do not have access to the same resources as their peers and put them at a disadvantage. We must do everything in our power to help every one of our students succeed.

In conclusion, I have outlined just a few of the issues our school system is experiencing. I hope that when developing the funding formulas, you prioritize investing in technology, our aging infrastructure, and universal pre-kindergarten. Only when we tackle the various forms of disparity can we make headway and level the playing field for our students. They are counting on us.

Thank you.

Darwin Romero

## Statement to the Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education final public hearing on October 25, 2017 from 6:30 – 8:30pm at Largo High School, 505 Largo Road, Upper Marlboro, MD

Good evening. Thank you Chairman Kirwan and Commission Members.

My name is Geraldine Hall and I am a parent to 2 children in the Prince George's County Public School system. I am also Secretary of the PTA at Dora Kennedy French Immersion—or DKFI-- a K through 8 public school.

I am here tonight to discuss language immersion programs, in which all subjects (except English, art, music, and gym) are taught in a foreign language. Immersion strengthens children's cognitive development overall, increases empathy and attention, and improves academic achievement. Immersion provides a proven, evidence-based platform for innovation and excellence in education. (I've included a short list of benefits and supporting scientific documentation in my written statement.)

### Cognitive, Social, and Academic Benefits of Immersion

Language acquisition, cognition and social awareness go hand in hand in young children. By integrating language and content, second language learning, too, becomes an integral part of a child's social and cognitive development, and students also gain significant multicultural experience in their education.

Research published in such journals as *The Annals of Neurology*, the *Journal of Psychology*, *The American Educational Research Journal*, *Brain Research*, and others, support the economic, social and mental benefits of a bilingual education.

- economic imperative of bilingual education
- increases in attention and executive functions by bilinguals
- increased empathy and perspective-taking skills, which are fundamental social and emotional skills
- other social and health benefits, including delayed onset of dementia in the aging brain, and
- improved reading skills in English, despite learning predominantly in a foreign language, and the
- increased student achievement in bilinguals

Some of these benefits of immersion are borne out by the achievements of our students and staff. You have access to our data ([http://www1.pgcps.org/uploadedfiles/school-report-cards/eng/DORAF\\_161416\\_2016ReportCard\\_ENG.pdf](http://www1.pgcps.org/uploadedfiles/school-report-cards/eng/DORAF_161416_2016ReportCard_ENG.pdf)), but I'll list a few points.

Immersion students perform very well on standardized tests. For example, in 2016, our students performed above the state averages in math, science, and English:

- 85% or greater of our 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders were rated as Proficient or Advanced in Science in the MSA exam. Statewide, those values are 60% and 65%, respectively.
- >60% of our 5<sup>th</sup>-graders, and 86% of our 8<sup>th</sup> graders met or exceeded expectations on the English/Language Arts PARCC exam. This is higher than the state average, and is in contrast to a state-wide rate of 39% each for 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Keep in mind, our students do not begin English classes until 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. And I could go on touting their achievements.
- In math, >50% of our 5<sup>th</sup> graders, and >86% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders met or exceeded expectations; statewide, 37% and 22% did so.
- Within Prince George's County Public Schools,
  - Our school came in 4<sup>th</sup> place in the PARCC exam for elementary schools, behind two TAG centers, and Whitehall Elementary School.

- We had a 49% passing rate on the PARCC exams overall. A student is considered passing the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) if they score a 4 or 5.
- For middle school PARCC, DKFI came first, with a 69% passing rate. We also ranked 14<sup>th</sup> of the 415 middle schools in the State of Maryland.
- For PARCC Algebra 1, Dora Kennedy French Immersion came 1st with a 95% passing rate.

Our curriculum follows that of all Prince George's County Public Schools; however, one key to our students' success is the innovation of the immersion program, which is also recognized globally. DKFI and Maya Angelou French Immersion received the French Label FrancÉducation seal of academic excellence this year, which was granted by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development to just under 30 primary schools in the entire USA. These 2 schools are only schools in Maryland to receive this honor.

In 2014, DKFI was announced as a National Blue Ribbon School by the US Department of Education, and a Maryland Blue Ribbon School.

## **Cultural Understanding Broader with Immersion**

The immersion model fosters a better understanding of other cultures, as well as the characteristics that distinguish the United States, and prepares students to succeed in the increasingly globalized society and economy in which we live. French is the, or an, official language in 29 countries. At DKFI, our students have teachers and staff from 5 continents and more than 16 countries, and nearly ¼ of our classroom teachers are African-American men, which is well above the national average of less than 2%, providing all our students with good male and female role models. Our students themselves are also diverse and learn from each other. Of our students

- 2% are Asian
- 79% are Black/African American
- 5% are Hispanic/Latino
- 12% are White
- 2% consider themselves of 2 or more races

(see <http://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/Entity.aspx?k=161416>)

For the children of French-speaking immigrants, the French Immersion Schools offer a bridge to their family's culture. And immersion students develop empathy, by experiencing how hard it can sometimes be to express oneself without easy access to the exact word they're seeking.

So, immersion students perform well on tests, expand their cognitive abilities, gain exposure to other cultures and more fully understand their own. I don't want to forget an important point: immersion students learn to speak another language fluently, which few Americans can.

## **Fluency Attained with Immersion**

This year, >140 of our DKFI students passed the internationally recognized elementary-level DELF, a fluency test administered by the French government, akin to our English-language TOEFL, which is a source of great pride to them and positions them well in their academics and professionally.

I've also benefitted from language immersion personally and professionally. In college, I studied German and then studied there. After full immersion in German, I earned a teaching position in Germany aside native speakers and spent more than 2 years teaching for the University of Maryland University College to members of

our armed forces and their family members, enabling them to better understand the country in which they were stationed. I've never understood more of what it is to be American, and about English, than when I was immersed in the language and European standards and customs differed from our own. We feel very fortunate to have a child in the immersion program: my 5<sup>th</sup>-grade son, is particularly thrilled at knowing French, which his parents do not, and with the wide range of teachers and classmates at his school. He and others feel empowered by their skills. For example, he's assisted French-speaking tourists, and he often knows the vocabulary words his sister brings home from her high school Spanish class before she does. It drives her crazy.

## **Immersion—Evidence-Based, Proven Model of Success**

Currently, a very limited number of our students statewide have access to immersion. I encourage the commission to evaluate, support, and expand the immersion educational model, which should be considered a strong, evidence-based, proven component of global and innovative learning. I thank you for your time and efforts on behalf of our children and state.

*(I've provided a brief bibliography that outlines the benefits of bilingualism and the investment in immersion programs.)*

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**REMARKS: Public Session: Kirwan Commission -  
Victoria Calhoun, President Jessup Elementary School PTA  
October 25, 2017 Central/Southern Maryland public hearing  
Largo High School, Upper Marlboro, Maryland**

Dr. Kirwan, and distinguished members of the Commission. I am here to express my specific concern with the way Maryland is using funding formulas in a process called “cost estimation” and hiding it from unwitting parents and taxpayers by calling it “The Foundation program.” In this way it has been subject to manipulation to derive an Education Budget that is politically desirable to those in power and to keep Lottery funds from going to education as was promised to Maryland residents. Tonight you are hearing that the funding formula “planning factors” have been held so low that it is having an adverse to severe impact on the educational outcomes for our kids across all categories, and is ultimately inadequate. While simultaneously I argue, having an adverse overall impact on our state’s economy by reducing money in circulation. We all now know Government spending is one of the three main drivers of the amount of money in actual circulation.

Cost Estimation is both an art and a science but high-quality cost estimates the Government Accounting Office says must follow a rigorous set of 12 steps. I have provided supporting information attached to my statement. The problem here is that Maryland needs to establish and implement a formal cost estimation process itself. Today is the information age, knowledge is power and we can do better! The process could be set up IAW cost estimation standards were the cost estimate process itself could

produce an estimate that is both more accurate in reflecting the actual costs, could contain sufficient detail to manage these costs, to adjust them and hold people accountable for outcomes. Right now the Commission itself is struggling with the fact that the confidence level of the cost estimate itself is unreliable, and therefore so are the desired educational outcomes. Tonight what you have heard is specific examples of what inadequate funding causes. What the Final Report on Adequacy of Education Funding in Maryland stated and I highlight tonight is that the current per student planning factor used now of about \$6,860 per student is too low. I ask you to avoid any further delay in adjusting this amount and the commission recommend taking the average the costing methods from the study and raise the funding level by about \$2500 to \$9400 per student.

In conjunction with this, I think the commission should recommend as the long term fix, to institute a formal cost estimation process and the procurement of an actual Cost Model, similar to what the Army uses in its Institutional Training Resource Model (ITRM), that would generate a cost estimate that more nearly represents the actual costs associated with the delivery of education in the State of Maryland.

Thank you.

Victoria Calhoun