

Written Testimony for the Record to the
Maryland Senate
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

and

Maryland House of Delegates
Appropriations Committee
Ways and Means Committee

Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Implementation (SB 1000/HB 1300)

February 17, 2020

SUPPORT WITH TECHNICAL AMENDMENT

Maryland PTA is the state's oldest and largest child advocacy organization that serves as a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education. We represent thousands of volunteer members in 900 public schools and we are devoted to the educational success of children and family engagement in Maryland. For 105 years, our mission has been to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

Maryland PTA submits this testimony in support of Senate Bill 1000 and House Bill 1300 ("SB 1000/HB 1300") that would repeal, alter, and add law to implement The Blueprint for Maryland's Future, which is intended to transform Maryland's early childhood, primary, and secondary education system to the levels of high-performing systems around the world. SB 1000/HB1300 would:

- require the State and each county to distribute certain amounts of education aid to county boards of education and schools;
- revise the funding formulas for education costs;
- designate the purpose for education;
- require each school to collect the Alternative Income Eligibility Form;
- alter the Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program;
- establish eligibility requirements to receive Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program funding;
- require the Maryland State Department of Education ("MSDE") to establish a sliding scale for prekindergarten;

- require families exceeding established income levels to pay for prekindergarten beginning in fiscal year 2026;
- require funds to be provided to establish Judy Centers;
- establish a process by which funds are redirected from a county to a county board of education for noncompliance;
- repeal the current calculation for the maintenance of local effort;
- establish a process to certify funds to be released or withheld after notice;
- establish the Accountability and Implementation Board as an independent unit of State government with the duties including:
 - the development of a Comprehensive Implementation Plan to implement The Blueprint for Maryland's Future,
 - reviewing and approving State and local government unit's implementation plans,
 - reviewing the use of certain funds by certain State and local government agencies,
 - retaining certain funds from certain local school systems under certain circumstances, and
 - contracting with an entity to conduct an independent assessment of the progress in implementing The Blueprint for Maryland's Future;
- establish the Accountability and Implementation Board Nominating Committee;
- require MSDE, and State and local government units to take actions regarding implementation plans;
- require MSDE to establish, administer, and supervise an Expert Review Team program;
- require MSDE to establish a school leadership training program;
- alter and enhance requirements for teacher training practicums and teacher preparation programs;
- require qualifications to obtain an initial certification to teach in the State and to retain certification;
- establish a career ladder system for educators comprised of levels through which teachers may progress and gain authority, status, and compensation;
- require a certain minimum teacher salary beginning July 1, 2029;
- establish teacher evaluation system requirements for the career ladder educator system;
- alter the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program;
- establish a Career Counseling Program for middle and high school students;
- expand full-day kindergarten, Judy Centers (where comprehensive early childhood education services are provided to young children and their families for the purpose of promoting school readiness through collaboration with participating agencies and programs), and Family Support Centers;
- require MSDE to develop curriculum standards and use assessments established by the State Board of Education ("State BOE") to identify low-performing schools;
- require the State BOE to establish certain college and career readiness standards, and MSDE, State BOE, county boards of education, and community colleges to take actions related to the standards;
- require each county board of education to provide post college and career readiness pathways at no cost to students;

- alter the requirements for child care accreditation and credential programs;
- establish a Director of Community Schools position in MSDE;
- require each community school to have a community school coordinator;
- establish the process by which an institution of higher education may request to establish a Community Schools licensing program;
- alter the Dual Enrollment Grant Program;
- establish the Teacher Quality and Diversity Program;
- provide for the implementation and administration of the Teacher Quality and Diversity Program;
- require the Maryland Higher Education Commission to provide assistance to institutions of higher education;
- alter the qualifications to receive loan repayment assistance;
- require the Office of Student Financial Assistance to publicize the availability of the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program;
- establish the Career and Technical Education (“CTE”) Committee, including the establishment of the CTE Expert Review Team program and the creation of a CTE Skills Standards Advisory Committee;
- alter mandated appropriations for the CTE Innovation Grant;
- address funding and appropriations;
- require MSDE to develop guidelines and standards, make determinations, adopt regulations, and take other actions to implement SB 1000/HB 1300;
- require each county board of education to take actions related to the career ladder, perform evaluations, and provide certain reports and information;
- require the State BOE to adopt regulations, perform evaluations, take actions, and provide reports and information to implement SB 1000/HB 1300;
- state certain goals of the State;
- address other technical and administrative requirements generally relating to the implementation of The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future.

Additionally, Maryland PTA suggests one amendment to SB 1000/HB 1300, in the definition of “Special Education Enrollment.” In proposed Education Article 5-225(A)(2), we recommend inserting “or as required under § 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973” at the end of subparagraph (I). The insertion would clarify that special education enrollment in public schools is intended to cover students with learning, mental, behavioral, and physical disabilities. Even though the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”) is cited as the statute that makes a free, appropriate public education available to, and ensures special education and related services for children with disabilities, the enforcement of the law does not expand to children with physical disabilities.

The Federal IDEA has been interpreted to focus mainly on children with learning or behavioral disabilities. Children with physical disabilities are provided rehabilitative services or accommodations under § 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The United States Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights (“OCR”) enforces

violations of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and has no enforcement authority over violations of the Federal IDEA.

SB 1000/HB 1300 is necessary to fulfill the State's constitutional promise to our children and return Maryland to #1 in education in the nation. Implementing the Blueprint for Maryland's Future will enhance the education of Maryland children, prepare them for success in the global market, and secure Maryland's future. Maryland PTA believes the State must enact SB 1000/HB 1300 to provide all children access to a thorough and efficient system of public education.

Eighteen years ago, Maryland enacted the Bridge to Excellence Act to restructure the public school finance system and increased state aid to public schools. It also collapsed 27 state funding programs into four programs and gave school systems more flexibility in spending. Over six fiscal years, Maryland invested \$1.3 billion into its public schools. The Great Recession slowed education spending considerably, and now, Maryland finds itself in a \$2.9 billion deficit on its promise to our children.

According to the Manhattan Institute, Maryland's high school graduation rate in 2002 was 72%. By 2017, Education Week was reporting a jump in the rate to 87%. In 2003, Maryland's combined math and English scores were one point above the nation's average reported in the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Fifteen years later, Maryland test scores are two points above the national average. While Maryland's graduation rate and test scores are just slightly above the national average, Maryland PTA wonders how much better they would be but for the impact of the Great Recession. We believe greater investment, along with the recommended enhancements in curriculum will result in greater improvement in education that will be demonstrated in the performance of public school students.

The 2019 General Assembly added \$1.1 billion to fund the first three years of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The new funding increased teacher salaries, expanded pre-kindergarten, increased special education funding and mental health staffing, and provided for 200 new community schools. It is time to implement the Blueprint fully to make sure that every school in the state is adequately and equitably funded.

Maryland PTA applauds the attention given to career and technical education in SB 1300/HB 1000. While we believe Maryland's children are some of the best and brightest in the world, we appreciate that not all of them want to attend a four-year college or university. Additionally, while the world is focused on the gains and advancements due to technology, many industries still require human resources. For instance, the Home Builders Institute recently reported a shortage of laborers in construction. Many students can graduate from high school, and immediately begin apprenticeships or trades that will pay a living wage and provide on-the-job training. Skilled laborers earn excellent wages without incurring the exorbitant costs of higher education, and we should encourage and support those students who wish to explore those career fields.

Maryland PTA also appreciates and supports the importance of investing in teachers. Many teachers leave the classroom because of the need to earn higher pay. The introduction of the career ladder in

teaching will permit teachers who want to remain in the instructional environment to earn increases in pay reflective of their experience and skills. While teacher salaries might not reach the level of corporate executives, the career ladder structure proposed in SB 1300/HB 1000 will make the teaching profession more attractive and increase the retention of master teachers.

As legislators deliberate over the proposals in SB 1300/HB 1000, Maryland PTA requests they keep the following things in mind. First, Maryland PTA opposes the use of public funds for non-public or private schools, except for state-approved, special needs schools. To take away tax dollars from public schools that are already underfunded would only detract from the Blueprint, decelerate academic progress in our public education system, and violate the public education mandate under the State Constitution. If the State wishes to support non-public, for-profit, and private schools, legislators should develop a grant program that can be administered, monitored, and overseen by State officials.

Next, SB 1300/HB 1000 includes an appropriation of \$500,000 for a task force to determine “college and career readiness standards.” In 2010, Maryland participated in the 26-state Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), which received a federal grant of \$185.9 million to develop an assessment to measure real student knowledge and skills as a part of the Race to the Top competition. The PARCC assessment system was reportedly anchored in the Common Core State Standards, which were consistent across states, clear to the public, and provided an on-ramp to college and careers. As a participant in the PARCC, Maryland adopted common assessments and common performance standards so that its students could be educated and evaluated according to the same standards as Maryland’s 25 partner-states.

According to the PARCC Year Two Report to the United States Department of Education, the PARCC would generate valid, reliable, and timely data, including measures of growth that could be used for accountability, and **student readiness for entry-level, credit-bearing college courses**. While Maryland ended PARCC testing last year, Maryland PTA questions the wisdom of spending additional funds on college and career readiness standards that were supposedly developed under PARCC. We believe considerably fewer resources could be used to build upon the lessons learned from PARCC and develop standards to evaluate success under the Blueprint.

Additionally, Maryland PTA understands some local jurisdictions are concerned about the local share requirement in SB 1300/HB 1000. We oppose any exemptions or waivers of local jurisdictions from compliance with the funding requirements. Equitable education is the mandate for ALL Maryland children. Maryland PTA believes the phase-in of local funding provides sufficient time for local jurisdictions to adjust their budgets or work with State appropriators to find additional funding sources.

Finally, Maryland PTA appreciates the provisions within SB 1000/HB 1000 to ensure proper implementation and accountability. An objective of Maryland PTA is to advocate for fiscal responsibility regarding public tax dollars in public education funding. We believe the Accountability and Implementation Board will ensure the \$4 billion proposed in education investment over the next 10 years will be used as intended by MSDE, State agencies, and local jurisdictions to improve the State’s

education system. Some might think the authority to withhold funding is heavy-handed. Maryland PTA sees it as an appropriate stick to ensure compliance with the Blueprint's mandate.

Maryland PTA anticipates additional adjustments will be required to facilitate implementation and practice as we move forward. However, considering the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies reported 66% of U.S.-born adults had low levels of English literacy skills in 2019, SB 1300/HB 1000 is a very good start to improving the State's educational system. For reasons stated, Maryland PTA emphatically supports SB 1000/HB 1300, and recommends a favorable report with the technical amendment noted.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "E. Battle".

Dr. Edna Harvin Battle
President