

February 17, 2020

Senator Guy Guzzone
Chair, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Delegate Maggie McIntosh
Chair, House Appropriations Committee
Rm 121
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Senator Paul G. Pinsky
Chair, Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Delegate Anne R. Kaiser
Chair, House Ways and Means Committee
Rm 131
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Support for House Bill 1300/ Senate Bill 1000_ Blueprint for Maryland's Future – Implementation

Dear Chairmen and Committee Members:

The Baltimore Community Foundation (BCF) supports House Bill 1300 and Senate Bill 1000 as their provisions represent the full recommendations of the Commission for Innovation and Excellence in Education (the Kirwan Commission) and offer a once-in-a-generation opportunity to expand early-childhood education programs, add career and technical education to schools, and give all communities the resources they need to succeed.

As an organization, BCF promotes the success of Baltimore's communities, its residents and particularly its young people by supporting effective public schools and equipping neighborhoods with the resources they need to build on community assets, attract investment and develop social capital. The recommendations put forth by the Kirwan Commission provide a plan that prioritizes our children and would result in significant economic benefits for all Maryland families.

The repercussions of an inadequately funded education system are clear and far-reaching. More than any other social determinant of health, access to a high-quality education defines a person's long-term health, employability, and quality of life. Everything from where someone lives, if they can afford healthcare, even their overall life expectancy is impacted by the education they receive.

By the State's own estimates, our existing education funding formula underfunds Maryland's public schools by at least \$2.9 billion annually. Moreover, the outdated nature of our current funding formula and programmatic structure has resulted in the emergence of significant geographic, ethnic, and socioeconomic opportunity gaps among students.

Research conducted by The Education Trust with funding from BCF found that nearly half of Maryland's Black or Latino student population attends school in one of the three most underfunded districts in the state, receiving on average about \$4000 less per student than the current funding formula directs. As a result, the data shows dramatic racial gaps in student outcomes regardless of family income. White students are more than twice as likely to meet or exceed expectations on 4th grade reading and Algebra I than both Black and Latino students. Black and Latino students are also less likely to enroll in college within one year of graduation than their White peers. The gaps in both reading and college enrollment are larger among higher income students. These disparities in outcomes are the direct result of inequalities in access to opportunities to learn.

Too many Maryland students and families are made to suffer the negative consequences of overcrowded classrooms, teacher shortages, and lack of access to resources and programs like pre-kindergarten and technical education. BCF knows first-hand how investments in our children can set them on the path to success. Beginning in 2012, BCF raised \$6 million in private support to leverage public investments to open eight new Judy Centers—early childhood education and service hubs—and fund a citywide coordinator position within the Baltimore City Public Schools system. The outcome data since have consistently shown that children with Judy Center experience outperform their peers without such experience on Kindergarten readiness assessments, confirming that the investments that the Kirwan Commission recommends in areas such as early childhood education will have a positive impact.

At this critical time, we must consider the weight of this opportunity and ask ourselves “what is more important than funding the blueprint for Maryland’s future?”

For these reasons, the Baltimore Community Foundation respectfully requests the Committees grant House Bill 1300 and Senate Bill 1000 a favorable report.

Respectfully,

Shanaysha Sauls
President & CEO, Baltimore Community Foundation