

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 1300 and Senate Bill 1000
The Blueprint for Maryland's Future**

**Senate Budget and Tax and Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committees
House Appropriations and Ways and Means Committees**

I strongly support House Bill 1300/Senate Bill 1000, the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, proposing to create a world-class prek-12 public school system in Maryland.

I have been an educator for the past 12 years, as a teacher, principal, and the Executive Director of Student Support and Safety in Baltimore City Public Schools. I am currently the director of the Education and Youth Development Program at the Open Society Institute-Baltimore, where I continue to use the insight I gained as an educator to help reform policies and practices to build strong and welcoming schools centered on teaching and learning.

I came into the Baltimore City School district at a time when children were routinely being sent home on out-of-school suspensions for even the most minor infractions. In 2004, at the height of this practice, more than 26,000 out-of-school suspension incidents were logged (approximately 29% of the student body). The adverse effects of these suspensions caused already struggling students to fall further and further behind academically and set those students on a course to become involved with the juvenile/criminal justice system (the school to prison pipeline).

Beginning in 2007 through present, the Baltimore City School district has made enormous strides in reducing out of school suspensions, however there remains a great need for educators across the state to be trained in alternatives to suspension, most notably restorative and complementary practices. A recent study released by the John's Hopkins School of Education found that the first cohort of schools that implemented restorative practices in 2018/2019 saw an aggregate reduction in suspensions of 44% in one school year! Restorative practices reduce school suspensions, strengthen relationships among adults and students and set a positive environment for quality teaching and learning. But these and other best practices require funding for training and coaching that would be augmented by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future (HB1300/SB1000) is necessary for Maryland's children because this legislation provides the resources necessary to ensure every child in Maryland receives a world-class education. The Blueprint will drastically change the trajectory for struggling learners by implementing targeted interventions early, and throughout a child's schooling, so no child will enter adulthood suffering from illiteracy again.

Not only is the Blueprint more equitable, this plan holds school systems accountable to more rigorous outcomes for student achievement that better reflect the new workforce needs of our evolving economy. Our students, who have been underserved by the current school system, will have more opportunities for success with the expansion of career and technical education pathways.

When we fully implement and fund the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, Maryland schools will move from mediocre to world-class and we will provide a blueprint for the nation.

For these reasons, I urge the committees to issue a favorable report for House Bill 1300 and Senate Bill 1000.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Karen', followed by a long, horizontal, wavy line that extends to the right.

Karen Webber, J.D.
Director, Education and Youth Development
District 43