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Good morning, Senators, Delegates, legislative staff, and members of the educational community. My name is Cristina Duncan Evans, and I am the Teacher Chair of the Baltimore Teachers Union. The Baltimore Teachers Union has been an active partner in the development of the Kirwan Commission recommendations, and we are proud that one of our teachers, Morgan Showalter, sat on the Commission.

The BTU fully supports the Blueprint, and we want to work together with the legislature to further enhance and refine it in order to achieve its bold intended outcomes.

In Baltimore City, we have had rigorous career pathways for over 10 years. Our locally developed model portfolio has passage rates similar to National Boards, and it is not uncommon for National Board-Certified teachers to fail our locally-developed portfolio process on their first attempt. In our ten years with a Career Pathways contract, we've learned that they have valuable benefits, but we have also learned that they don't address inequity issues, and can actually exacerbate them. The BTU wants to see the most successful possible version of career pathways in the Blueprint and are looking forward to a more detailed conversation about creating and rewarding new opportunities for teacher leadership.

A second area where the BTU hopes to partner is on the issue of formula equity and targeted supports for students with extra needs. Baltimore City has the highest percentage in the state of students living in concentrated poverty, with disproportionate levels of student mobility, exposure to lead, and traumatic childhood experiences. We applaud the Commission for recognizing that just because families can't afford to supplement their child's education, doesn't mean their child should not have every opportunity to develop their talents to the fullest possible extent. As we continue the conversation over funding formulas, we'll be looking for markers to ensure that wealth gaps in our state don't continue to disadvantage our young people.