

EQUITY FOR ALL KIDS



To: Chair Pinsky and members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Chair Kaiser and members of the Ways and Means Committee
Chair McIntosh and members of the Appropriations Committee
Chair Guzzone and members of the Budget and Taxation Committee

From: [Shamoyia Gardiner](#), Education Policy Director
[Melissa Rock](#), Birth to Three Strategic Initiative Director

Re: Senate Bill 1000/House Bill 1300: Blueprint for Maryland's Future-Implementation

Date: February 17, 2020

Position: Support with Amendments

Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY) is honored to provide testimony on the historic legislative effort that is Senate Bill 1000 and House Bill 1300: Blueprint for Maryland's Future – Implementation. We have borne witness to the more than three years' worth of research, debate, analysis, and general effort that has gone into creating the recommendations which undergird this legislation, and appreciate the hard work of the members of both the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education and the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Funding Formula Workgroup, as well as the labor of the staff at the Department of Legislative Services. **ACY supports the bill, with amendments.**

Fund Our Schools--Equitably

For too long, Maryland has underfunded its public schools. When the Commission began its work, public schools were losing out on \$2.9 billion annually, averaging \$2 million dollars per school, per year. Unfortunately, the numbers were not as neat in practice: the three most underfunded jurisdictions in the State (Baltimore City, Prince George's and Caroline counties) were also home to nearly half of the students of color in the State, mirroring national and historical disinvestment in students of color and the communities they come from. **The regressive-ness of Maryland's current funding formula sends more public dollars to relatively wealthy districts and fewer to higher-need districts and must be undone in the new Blueprint formula.**

More than 21st Century Buildings

Many of the policies set forth by the Blueprint are innovative—in Maryland and possibly in the broader United States context. The pursuit of universal access to pre-kindergarten, of high-quality career and technical education programming, even of a Statewide Community Schools strategy are novel for us, but we must be clear that **these policy ideas are not simply new fantasies dreamed up by the Commission. Many of the Blueprint's policies are empirically evidenced best practices already being implemented in other parts of the world with success.** These policies work in concert with one another, external school construction efforts, as well as external post-secondary educational reform efforts to realize the vision of a world-class system of public education in Maryland, in which all students have equitable access to the resources which will allow them to achieve at their fullest potential.

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Advocates for Children and Youth builds a strong Maryland by advancing policies and programs to ensure children and families of every race, ethnicity, and place of birth achieve their full potential.

Recommendations to Strengthen the Impact of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future
ACY, as Stated above, supports the Blueprint. **Any amendments offered by ACY** are done so with the explicit intention of strengthening the successful impact of the Blueprint for students and communities across the State and **should not be misconstrued as a rejection of the thoughtful proposal at hand.** We'll offer amendment suggestions in the context of the broad policy areas the Commission worked within, noting page and line numbers aligned with the text of HB 1300.

Early Childhood Education

- 85% of a child's brain development is complete when that child turns 3. It is imperative that brain development is not interrupted or negatively impacted in young children, and that supportive services for young children and their families are adequately resourced.
 - Judy Centers serve at least 300 individuals each year and require full funding of \$330,000 per Center rather than \$275,000 (page 46, line 8)
 - An **increase funding for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC)** must accompany funding for Judy Centers, as these professionals provide technical support to the staff and families at child care centers when a young child is demonstrating problematic behavior. It takes social emotional skills for a young child to be able to control their emotions, interact well with other children, and cope with all the distractions in a classroom once they enter school.
- Consistently define full-day and half-day pre-kindergarten (pre-K)
 - Page 44, line 17 defines "full-day" as "not less than 7 hours or more than 12 hours per day." However, on page 121, line 17, full day pre-kindergarten is defined as a "six and one-half hour school day". These definitions need to be consistent with one another and the federal Head Start definition of 6.5 hours rather than 7 hours. To keep all definitions consistent with federal Head Start definitions, on p.118, line 24 of HB 1300, half day should also be defined as 3.5 hours rather than 2.5 hours.
- Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) and equitable time for preparation (pages 139-140)
 - The bill allows school districts to administer a portion of the KRA during the summer (before kindergarten begins) and administer the remaining portion during the school year. Allowing districts to stagger the KRA assessment creates an advantage for district-run pre-K programs over private/community-based programs. Children in the later programs will only be given the opportunity to test once, in the fall when they arrive at kindergarten. Research shows and validates the impact of summer learning loss for young children. The **children not served directly by the district will not score as high or demonstrate readiness as if they were immediately tested after their prior placement during the summer,** building inequity into the mixed-delivery system.

- While private providers will need to be licensed and to comply with COMAR regulations, Local Education Agencies will not have the same mandate and need to have these defined. To ensure consistent quality of programs in this mixed-delivery system, ACY recommends that COMAR and federal Head Start regulations be adhered to by all providers in the system: **for classes with 3-year-olds, class sizes should capped at 17 children (or fewer).**
- Alter the definition of “Tier 1” student to include students who are English Language Learners
- Require that all (public, private, community-based) providers receiving public funds under the Blueprint be subject to the provisions 2017 ban on pre-K through 2nd grade suspensions and expulsions.
- Include funding for the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program
- The Blueprint should provide explicit language about supporting existing community-based providers in meeting the existing and any new EXCELS criteria set forth in this and subsequent legislation, with particular emphasis on ensuring that **programs owned and operated by gender minorities and people of color receive preferential access to these financial and technical assistance resources.**

High-Quality and Diverse Teachers and School Leaders

- Annual MSDE/MHEC report should **include data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, sex, and linguistic diversity** (mono-lingual vs bi-lingual and multi-lingual) of candidates in as many areas as possible to ensure completeness of analysis:
 - Beginning on page 80, line 29 and including from part B:
 - Sub-part 1 I through IV (page 81, line 12) and sub-part 1 VI (lines 17-19)
 - Sub-part 7 (page 82, lines 1-2)
 - Sub-parts 9-13 (page 82, lines 5-20)
- Replace all instances of “minority” with “of color” as applicable to denote race
- Teacher quality measurements should include competency in non-punitive, non-exclusionary student behavioral management techniques, including but not limited to Restorative Practices and Trauma-Informed and Trauma-Responsive techniques (page 82, lines 3-5)
- Teacher training practicums for alternative preparation programs must also include non-punitive, non-exclusionary student behavioral management proficiency to be demonstrated (page 85, lines 10-17)
 - This component should be included in traditional preparation programs (page 84, lines 1-3 and page 87, lines 8-9)
- Include in the *Guiding Principles for Development of the Career Ladder* a provision for the equitable access to climbing the career ladder for teacher candidates of color and **set goals for the equitable distribution of candidates across the salary schedule**, benchmarked by the demographics of the teacher population in the State (page 97, lines 11-23).
 - This (and other recommendations with regard to race) is not meant to be misconstrued as recommending a racial quota in the salary schedule or incentivizing unearned placement in the salary schedule.

- The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification data demonstrates clearly inequitable certification outcomes for teachers of color. In 2018, National Board Certified Teachers were 5% Black, 4% Latino, and 10% “other”. Successful candidates are overwhelmingly White (82%). In Maryland, these disparities hold constant (8% Black, 2% Latino, 15% “other” and 75% White). Black teachers specifically were 27% of Maryland’s candidates that year, while White teachers were only 52% of that population. **National Board Certification is inherently racially inequitable and is an alarming standard to tie to teacher career ladders.**
 - Requiring National Board Certification (NBC) builds inequity into the teacher career ladder, risking a future in which teachers of color—particularly Black and Latino teachers—are paid significantly less than their peers.
 - The Commission, in response to the above data, said they would offer supports to teacher candidates of color specifically—but this is not reflected in HB1300/SB 1000. In fact, page 115, lines 6-10, denotes supportive funding for each teacher who pursues NBC, which not only fails to mitigate the racially inequitable impacts of the NBC itself, but **will also disproportionately send State resources to White teachers in Montgomery, Anne Arundel, and Howard counties**, which have larger numbers of NBC teachers than many other jurisdictions. Only one of the three districts facing persistent underfunding from the State would benefit significantly as the bill is written (Prince George’s). Specifically, designated supports for teachers of color in high-need jurisdictions must be included in the legislation.
- Teacher Quality and Diversity Program
 - (Page 158, lines 12-13) include “arts and arts education”
 - (Page 158, line 22) include “specifically at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and other Minority-Serving Institutions in the State”

College and Career Readiness Pathways

- (Page 156, lines 11-15) seeking clarification on whether the remaining 25% of the cost of tuition is charged for dually-enrolled students and if so, who is responsible for paying that portion of tuition?
- (Page 161, lines 13-17) after “goals that reach 45%”, include language reflecting a goal that the racial composition of students meeting the readiness standard should be roughly equivalent to the State’s public school enrollment. By the end of the 2029-2030 school year, this should be feasible.
- (Page 161, lines 26-31) include after “high school” disaggregation of data in the report by student sex, race, ethnicity, disability status, and English Language Learner status
- (page 163, lines 24-26) seeking clarification on how many members representing each sector shall be placed on the CTE Committee
- (Page 166, lines 1-3) to include a provision prioritizing grants for programs at schools that have been historically underfunded by the State and/or have the lowest graduation rates, matriculation to post-secondary education, or full-time,

wage-sustaining employment as identified in the Maryland Longitudinal Data System

More Resources to Ensure All Students Succeed

- On Community Schools: ACY is thrilled to see language around trauma-informed schools included in the Blueprint. Trauma-informed schools have staff who are equipped to recognize the symptoms of trauma, which differs from trauma-responsive schools, which are complete school environments and internal structures to facilitate the ability of all individuals to address trauma, regardless of their being trauma-informed. ACY would like to see **a delineation between trauma-informed and trauma-responsive** included in this section of the Blueprint, as such a definition will strengthen the structures of Community Schools throughout the State.
 - (Page 148, line 14) "includes but are not limited to". The flexibility in the list of services is inherent in the implementation of Community Schools which meet the specific needs of their populations
 - (Page 148, line 17) include "and from school"
 - (Page 149, line 8) define "enrichment experiences"
 - (Page 150, lines 18-20) should include a description of specific professional development for Community School Coordinators (CSCs)
 - (Page 150, lines 22-24) **requires CSCs to be "experienced and qualified" but does not define either term or describe how one who is not a current CSC would gain experience or qualification**
 - (Page 151, lines 18-24) must include collaboration with students and community members as a component of the needs assessment and should not limit inclusion of parents and teachers unaffiliated with a parent-teacher organization/school council. The inclusion of students at the secondary level (grade 6 and on) is imperative to ensuring the validity of the needs assessment.
- Tutoring and Struggling Student Supports
 - (Page 39, lines 4-7) replace "PARRC" with" PARCC"

Governance and Accountability

- (page 60, lines 20-30) insert "racially equitable education policy practices" and "intergenerational approaches to education"
- (page 62, lines 3-6) insert "the Board shall publicly post information about upcoming meetings on [some State-run website] at least one week prior to such meeting"
- (page 70, lines 21-26) insert "disability status and pregnant/parenting status"
- (pages 70-71, lines 27-4) all student outcome data should be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, disability status, English Language Learner status, and pregnant/parenting status
- (page 74, lines 16-17) and report disaggregated data about those NBC teachers
- **ACY generally does not see the withholding of funds from school districts as a viable, productive solution to the issue that spurred the creation of the Blueprint—the State's underfunding of its public schools.** (page 66, lines 21-25; page 67, lines 15-18; page 17, lines 15-21)

- ACY is also pleased to see the reporting of information regarding disciplinary action included in the bill as drafted (page 71, line 2) and believes this is critical to a truly accountable system

The Formula

- Calculating Full-Time Equivalent Enrollment
 - (page 12, lines 11-19) neither makes mention of students enrolled in public pre-K programs as operated and resourced by a local board of education, nor introduces a methodology for including pre-K students as the mixed-delivery system is implemented over time. Pre-K enrollment is, however, included in the calculation of a Local Contribution Rate.
- Accurately assessing students living in poverty
 - (page 26-27, lines 26-1) The methodology for calculating students living in poverty at a given school between FY17-FY25 is reflective of the intent of the Commission and the Funding Formula workgroup as it will use a double verification (not double-counting) to ensure that local board of education capture as many students as possible, however (page 27, lines 14-17) the methodology used from FY26 on would force local boards of education to choose between the incomplete direct certification count and the incomplete income verification count. **The legislation should allow the double verification method to be used until (1) a more accurate count is able to be taken or (2) federal policies and practices allow immigrant and mixed-status new Americans to enroll in safety net programs without fear of government retribution**

This Is A "One-Maryland" Effort and Requires A Shift in Mindset

Public education funding is a mandated responsibility of the State as set forth in its Constitution. **76% of student poverty in Maryland exists outside of Baltimore City. This is not a Baltimore-versus-everyone-else issue.** What's more, 63% of all low-income students in Maryland are enrolled in districts with poverty rates of 15% or below. When we fail to disaggregate data, it's easy to assume that poverty is only an issue in some parts of our State and it's just as easy to ignore racial disparities in other data that arise as a consequence. It is also quite tempting to overlook the needs of these students when conversations about massive funding investments, like the one proposed by HB 1300/SB1000 occur.

In Maryland, not a single jurisdiction exists that doesn't have at least one school with at least 40% of students living in concentrated poverty. Income inequality is on the rise, and unless we take advantage of public systems like education now, we will continue to see the negative impacts of living in poverty be exacerbated.

A public system of education which achieves racially equitable outcomes for all students is within Maryland's reach. The only legitimate question in this conversation is: "How do we get there?". The time is now, our children have been waiting for too long already, and every delay is jeopardizing our State's future.

For all the reasons and with all the strengthening suggestions above, ACY is proud to urge a favorable report on this bill.