



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

**February 17, 2020**

**SB 1000 & HB 1300  
Blueprint for Maryland's Future – Implementation**

**House Ways & Means Committee / House Appropriations Committee  
Senate Budget & Taxation Committee / Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs  
Committees**

**Position: SUPPORT**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in SUPPORT of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation, SB 1000 & HB 1300. The Conference represents the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, the Archdioceses of Baltimore and Washington and the Diocese of Wilmington, which together encompass over one million Marylanders.

This legislation offers reforms toward an equitable world-class education system for all of Maryland's public school students. As the second largest social services provider in Maryland outside of our state government, the Church is uniquely positioned to assess the needs of our state, particularly in its most underserved areas. Through our charities, hospitals, parishes and other programs, we understand the crippling effect of poverty. We also know firsthand that education is a pathway out of poverty. Thus, we offer our support for SB 1000 & HB 1300, believing it to be such a pathway.

**Please direct your attention to the attached January 29, 2020, op-ed jointly authored by Baltimore City Schools CEO Dr. Sonja Santelises and Most Rev. William E. Lori, Archbishop of Baltimore, as the remainder of our testimony.**

# Baltimore archbishop, schools CEO: Funding Kirwan education plan shows commitment to kids | COMMENTARY

By REV. WILLIAM E. LORI, ARCHBISHOP OF BALTIMORE, and DR. SONJA SANTELISES  
FOR THE BALTIMORE SUN | JAN 29, 2020 | 8:01 PM

As the 2020 legislative session of the Maryland General Assembly convenes, we offer these words as leaders of the archdiocesan Catholic school system and the Baltimore City public school system that together serve nearly 90,000 school children in Baltimore. We implore our elected officials to recognize the opportunity before them this year to achieve a significant and lasting impact on the lives of these children.

It is clear to all that the most pressing issue to be debated this session is the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education, better known as the Kirwan Commission. After several years of intense study and deliberation, the commission has outlined a robust, and admittedly expensive, set of research-based reforms for Maryland's public school system. These reforms offer the promise of equitable and excellent educational opportunities for every student, regardless of their income or neighborhood.

Here in Baltimore, these reforms could not be more urgent. At a time when our city continues to suffer the trauma of violence that has taken more than 350 lives last year, we implore all legislators in Annapolis to consider the



Democratic state and county lawmakers gathered at Parole Elementary School with constituents and educators to discuss the findings of Kirwan Commission. From left: County Executive Stuart Pittman, Sen. Sarah Elfreth and Delegates Eric Luedtke, Alice Cain and Shaneka Henson. (Alex Mann / Capital Gazette)

complex and extensive needs that we are working to address among our students and their families.

Our students need teachers who are equipped with the expertise and experience to understand and manage the myriad spectrum of issues their students and families are confronting, as well as the wrap-around services to enable them to be ready to learn. They need safe, well-maintained and welcoming school environments that assure them they are valued and cared for. They need stimulating educational standards that acknowledge their potential and provide them the individually-tailored tools to meet those standards.

More than anything, our children in Baltimore need champions who will no longer settle for the decades of disparate treatment that has plagued our city and led to so much devastation. If we are ever to turn the tide on the challenges facing Baltimore, there is no doubt that it will come through reaching our youngest generations, and ensuring they are no longer denied the opportunities that a sound education can provide.

To be sure, every child in Maryland deserves this same opportunity, and many jurisdictions, whether they be rural, suburban or urban, face similar challenges in serving their student populations. We fully acknowledge, as well, that the significant increases in both state and local spending over the next 10 years called for in the Kirwan recommendations must be scrutinized both in terms of realistic affordability and strict standards of accountability.

At the same time, however, we maintain that successfully addressing the compelling needs of the children of Baltimore will ultimately be the measure of our commitment to them — and to their future and ours. Their fate — subject for far too long to the vestiges of the undeniable racism that infects so many aspects of our society — must rest on the conscience of every one of the 188 members of the Maryland General Assembly.

The hard work of balancing competing regional interests, budget considerations and assurances that future investments will yield promised results will be no easy task for our legislators. We stand ready to support them in any way and pledge to boldly stand with them in justifying our state's priorities in favor of our young people. We urge our representatives to commit the resources that will enable the human infrastructure which our state and communities require to be competitive in this 21st century. Time is not on our side and each day that we delay, we lose further ground. Surely, there is no greater priority than this overdue investment in our youth and all that they will achieve, if only given the chance.

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