



Testimony in Support of HB1300 and SB1000 With Amendments

Chair Anne Kaiser
Ways and Means Committee

Chair Maggie McIntosh
Appropriations Committee

Chair Guy Guzzone
Budget & Taxation Committee

Chair Paul Pinsky
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

Dear Chairs and Committee Members,

In order to support the overall mission of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, CASA, the largest immigrant rights organization in Maryland and as a coalition member of the Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education, we submit this letter outlining our position and suggested amendments for HB1300/SB1000. We are committed to ensure that new reforms do not replicate old mistakes. We appreciate the considerable analyses conducted to get to this legislation and ask that you consider the following ways that this bill can be bolstered. Our solutions consider the racially equitable impact on schools across the state, prioritizing both marginally served and historically under-resourced communities.

We have addressed in this letter (suggested amendments attached) broadening methods to count all students regardless of status, prioritizing English Language and Black and Latino students in the expansion of Pre-Kindergarten and College Career Ready standards, and amplifying opportunities for current and new educators to be prepared in culturally competent courses and professional development. Our amendments are imperative to pass to ensure the Blueprint is successful in changing the trajectory of Maryland students presently and beyond.

Accurately Count All Students

Due to changes in how districts collect data to determine which students are low-income, many students are not being counted in schools' poverty data. Additionally changes under the Trump Administration on how individuals can use public social benefits has caused many members of the immigrant community to not apply for SNAP, TANF or Medicaid. The switch to Direct

Certification (using government assistance rolls as the primary means to identify the poor and working poor) has led to fewer families identified as living in poverty. Some schools in Baltimore City have experienced a 40% drop in poverty due to Direct Certification, leaving these schools with fewer funds. This problem is particularly pronounced among immigrant populations. This inaccurate collection of data leads to significant reductions in state and federal funds, and loss of funding opportunities for schools in areas of concentrated poverty. We urge you to consider multiple ways to count students' income levels as considered in the Funding formulas set forth in the legislation.

Ensure that English Learners and Other Immigrant Students Access the Programming and Teacher Talent Necessary to Advance

It is imperative that proven best practices and recommendations to best serve EL students are included in the Blueprint legislation. According to data from the Maryland State Department of Education, in 2016-2017, the EL population made up 9% of the overall student population in the state; some counties have doubled or nearly tripled their numbers in the last five years. Noting these changes in 2015, MSDE launched a task force made up of immigrant serving organizational partners, public school staff and administrators, and higher education experts to create a comprehensive set of recommendations on how best to serve EL students. These Taskforce recommendations encompassed the expansion of Pre-Kindergarten access, promoting dual language programs to increase pathways for English Learners to accelerated classes and increasing the preparation of educators and school staff. In light of the special needs of English learners, we recommend **prioritizing English learners in the expansion of Pre-Kindergarten Programs** by including English Learners throughout definitions in the Early Childhood Education and College and Career Readiness standards and changing the definition of Tier 1 student to include English Learners.

We also recommend requiring professional development to better serve English Learners and immigrant students and instituting a mastery exam for all general education teachers educating English learners. Some institutions are simply better at recruiting diverse teaching pools with greater skills educating diverse teachers. We support the financial commitment for college training programs for teachers but recommend that funding be targeted to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), member institutions of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACUs), Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), and alternative certification programs with a track record of preparing diverse and high-quality teachers and leaders.

Ensure that All Students Can Prove Excellence

A 2019 study by the Education Trust revealed that Black and Latino students are less likely to be enrolled in Advanced Placement courses or early college programs than white students, even when the courses are offered at their schools and their academic records suggest they are prepared. Moreover, the data suggest that Black and Latino students are funneled into career and technical education programs that are less likely to prepare them for success than white students when they enter the workforce. To ensure barriers for English Learners, Black and Latino students to accelerated programs and classes are reduced, we recommend that

admission be honed through universal testing. Further, data regarding program participation must be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, family income, language and disability status so as to determine best practices and solutions for these inequities in placement of Black and Latino students in accelerated programs.

These recommendations seek to bolster the Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation and ensure that often times underserved and marginalized students can access all of the recommended reforms. We hope that these recommendations are given favorable consideration as both Chambers embark on the next phase of their work around the Blueprint. CASA appreciates the work and time that the Kirwan Commissioners, policy staff, and Legislators have dedicated to ensuring that Maryland students have access to a world class education.

Thank you,

Maritza Solano
Director of Education

