

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Testimony in Support of House Bill 1300 Blueprint for Maryland’s Future - Implementation

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Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) supports House Bill 1300, which seeks to transform Maryland’s education system to world-class student achievement levels by adopting and implementing the recommendations of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (Kirwan Commission).

As the Kirwan Commission has worked to finalize its recommendations and next steps for the current state legislative session, City Schools wishes to provide an update on the work the district has undertaken over the past two years to develop a plan for what a world-class education system would look like for Baltimore City Public Schools, as well as what it would take to provide such an education.

Our final report, [*Investing in Our Future: A World-Class Education System for Baltimore’s Students*](#), is available at www.baltimorecityschools.org.

The report outlines services and structures that City Schools believes must be in place in order to build a world-class education system for Baltimore’s students. This framework was created with input from local and national experts, community activists, and community members – including City Schools’ parents, school leaders, and administrators – and is informed by research from leading national and international scholars in education policy and practice.

In creating the structure for this document, we adapted the building blocks identified by the Kirwan Commission to create seven categories of investment. Descriptions for each category include details of services that should be funded through a per-pupil foundation amount, with additional weights for students in specific subgroups (students with disabilities, low-income students, and English learners) and allocations for schools serving concentrations of low-income students.

It has always been our hope that this report would serve as a valuable tool for policymakers as the Kirwan Commission recommendations were brought to the General Assembly for debate. We believe the services we have outlined are essential to the success of our students and should be made available as soon as possible through adoption of a new state funding formula.

It has now been more than three years since APA Consultants first presented the final Adequacy Study Report to the Kirwan Commission, which revealed that City Schools needs an additional \$358 million annually to ensure an adequate education for Baltimore’s students. Similarly, an analysis conducted by the state’s own Department of Legislative Services found that if the inflation factor had not been eliminated from the current Thornton funding formula, an additional \$290 million per year would have been available to support an adequate education for Baltimore’s children.

In addition to the dramatic underfunding of operations cited by both studies above, City Schools' capital challenges were fully documented in the 2012 Jacobs Report – a comprehensive facility condition assessment – which concluded it would cost \$2.5 billion to bring all City Schools buildings up to *minimally acceptable* standards. In 2019, adjusting for inflation, we estimate the overall costs at \$3 billion.

These findings of inadequate funding are particularly disturbing in the context of ensuring equity for non-white students and students from low-income households, populations that make up the majority of City Schools' enrollment. Outside education policy experts have consistently found Maryland's current education funding to be inequitably distributed:

- In its most recent 2018 analysis, the **Education Trust** found that most districts in Maryland do not receive the money the state says they need, and districts with the most students of color are shortchanged the most. Nearly half of Maryland's Black or Latino students attend schools in one of the three most underfunded districts in the state.
- As presented in the July 2018 **Hechinger Report**, the latest data from the federal government reveal that while in a majority of states students in the poorest school districts tend to receive more funding than rich districts, Maryland is one of six states where the wealthiest 25 percent of school districts receive more money than the poorest.
- In its 2017 analysis, the **Education Law Center** found that Maryland's funding system is among the most regressive nationwide for its failure to provide additional funding to school districts with higher concentrations of low-income students.
- In an examination of the disparities in local funding between high- and low-income districts, the **Urban Institute** ranked Maryland among the worst nationally (42 out of 50) for providing higher amounts of funding to non-poor students, with fewer dollars being allocated to low-income students.
- Findings from the **Maryland Center on Economic Policy** reveal that as of 2015, more than half of black students in Maryland attend substantially underfunded schools. Specifically, 53% of black students attend chronically underfunded schools, compared to just 8% of white students in Maryland.

Given the overwhelming evidence documenting fundamental inequities in Maryland's public education system, City Schools feels strongly that any Kirwan funding actions taken by the General Assembly during Session 2020 should be prioritized toward districts with the most significant adequacy gaps. As the legislature considers the mechanics of the proposed ten-year phase in, we respectfully urge that funds be targeted toward students who have been the most underserved historically and continue to be underserved in 2020 under the current state funding formula.

Additionally, considering the clear documentation that Baltimore City Public Schools are inadequately funded by hundreds of millions of dollars under the current Thornton formula, it is no surprise the district continues to struggle with meeting its most basic needs – from music teachers to guidance counselors, oversized classes to outdated curriculums. As such, it is concerning that such a significant portion of funds issued under HB 1300 will ultimately require schools to apply for individual grants and prioritize new initiatives as they struggle to address their most pressing,

existing basic needs.

In closing, for the past decade, Baltimore's young people have waited for resources while the state has systematically underfunded City Schools. For years, our students, families, and staff have waited for what should have been received through the state's own funding formula. Year over year, it has grown harder to fund the programs that motivate students to learn, provide the enrichment that ignites their curiosity, offer the counseling, support, and services they need, attract and retain highly qualified staff, and repair our deteriorating buildings.

If Maryland is to continue its ranking as a national leader in education, the state must work collaboratively with local school districts to develop and implement innovative solutions that will provide adequate and equitable funding for all students, no matter their zip code, race, or socio-economic status.

We appreciate your consideration of City Schools' concerns and look forward to working with the committees through the amendment process in the weeks ahead. We respectfully urge a favorable report of House Bill 1300.

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