



# Maryland Education Coalition



INSPIRES ACTION & POSITIVE CHANGE SO MARYLAND'S STUDENTS SUCCEED

Rick Tyler, Jr., Chair

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February 17, 2020

## Maryland Senate

- Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee
- Budget and Taxation Committee

## Maryland House of Delegates

- Appropriations Committee
- Ways and Means Committee

Re: SB 1000/HB 1300: **Blueprint for Maryland’s Future-Implementation** Position: **Support with Amendments**

The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) thanks the committee members, Kirwan Commission, consultants and the professional staff that have led to the development of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future-Implementation plan. We also thank the hundreds of advocates statewide who worked collaboratively in support of 900,000 plus Maryland public school students. MEC believes access to a high quality public education is not only their constitution right, but their civil right defined in federal and state laws or regulations.

For over 40 years the Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) has been advocating for adequate, equitable funding and systematic accountability on behalf of public education, children and families in Maryland regardless of their academic, cultural, economic, geographic, racial or other demographic status. Our members have decades of experience and expertise in numerous areas and participated in this process at numerous levels. Although we advocate for all children, we focus on those students of color, special needs and lower income, especially if they reside in lower wealth jurisdictions found to be underfunded or underserved.

MEC supports SB1000/HB1300- Blueprint for Maryland’s Future overall with recommended clarifications or amendments (attached). We urge the General Assembly to review them with staff to ensure all students have access to quality educational resources, instructional rigor and student services throughout their academic career. We ask for assurances to the extent possible, that there are no underfunded mandates within the foundation formula defined in current laws or regulations such as the Arts or Gifted & Talented students-a major student group. We also ask for additional support for low wealth jurisdictions with disproportionate numbers of Lower Income, Special Needs, and Limited English students, especially those with high numbers of students of color historically underserved.

MEC supports accountability with clear language that ensures qualified administrators or educators first work collaboratively with local school systems to ensure adequate funding, instructional resources or services are available with sufficient time for training and implementation, including a consensus on concerns with opportunities for technical support using successful, evidence-based practices with stakeholders participation. We are also concern with language that could allow the holding of significant funds at the school system or school level. Used several times in the past, it created harm to underfunded school systems, delaying resources.

In closing, MEC strongly supports SB1000/HB1300 and urges the General Assembly to submit a favorable report with amendments. **Remember, our kids can’t wait for strong schools and neither can Maryland.**

**NOTE:** Please note comments from other MEC members and see attached for recommended amendments

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Advocates for Children and Youth, American Civil Liberties Union of MD, Arts Education in Maryland Schools, CASA, Decoding Dyslexia of MD, Disability Rights Maryland, League of Women Voters of MD, Let Them See Clearly, Maryland Coalition for Community Schools, Maryland PTA, Maryland NAACP, Maryland Out of School Time Network, , Right to Read Maryland, School Social Workers of MD, Sharon Rubinstein

MEC urges the General Assembly to include the following clarifications or amendments:

- ❖ **Section 5-101, A, page 8 - Budget reporting** – Add - **VIII. GIFTED & TALENTED STUDENTS UNDER § 8-201-8-204 and NEW COMAR 13A.04.07 Gifted and Talented Education** (Gifted & Talented student funding defined in the foundation)
  - (Excerpt: **D. A universal screening process shall be used to identify** a significant number of students in every school and **at least 10 percent in each local school system, as early as possible, but no later than Grade 3.**)
- ❖ **Subtitle 2, page 10- Aid to Education** - MEC is concern that there may not be adequate funding to address mandates in COMAR, State ESSA Plan & other state or federal laws (Title programs, Instruction Programs, Core Subjects, etc.)
- ❖ **Subtitle 4, page 59, Accountability and Implementation Board** - MEC does not object to the board, but we are concern their membership may not adequately ensuring meaning stakeholder consultation in the decision-making process as defined in federal law and elsewhere <sup>1</sup>We are concern the makeup may not be independent or objective.

There also does not appear to be a requirement that a member has a “high level” of experience or expertise with each of the major student groups (Special Ed, ELL, Lower-income, Gifted & Talented), a requirement to be competent culturally, economically and geographically nor in differences in ability or need, especially for students of color.
- ❖ **Section 5-405, page 66- Withholding of Funds to LEAs** - MEC objects to the holding of any government funds for public education, especially if there is evidence of unfunded or under-funded mandates and only after MSDE and the LSS have worked collaboratively to address concerns, agreed by consensus on a plan to address them with a realistic timeline and resources that will promote progress or success. This has been attempted several times in the past, directly harming student & staff resources or services and the school system, school or program level.
- ❖ **5-406, pages 69, School level expenditure reporting** - Does not appear to clearly require local school improvement teams with transparency and stakeholder consultation in the decision-making process
- ❖ **5-407, page 69, Withholding of Funds from Departments** - MEC again objects to the holding of any government funds for public education, especially if there is evidence of unfunded or under-funded mandates and only after MSDE and the LSS have worked collaboratively to address concerns, agree by consensus on a plan to address them with a realistic timeline and resources that will promote progress or success. Simply put, it is more harmful and less effective.
- ❖ **5-409, page 72, Other Board Duties and Reporting** - Does not appear to require meaningful stakeholder consultation in the decision-making process and transparency
- ❖ **Section 6-121, page 86, Elements of Teacher Prep Program and Role for MSDE** - Does not appear to clearly require educators or administrators to have quality preparation to understand, identify, or provide services for Special Needs, ELL or Gifted & Talented/High Ability students nor students of color or of different cultures
- ❖ **6-1001, page 95, Definitions** - Add to (2) **“TEACHER” DOES NOT INCLUDE, UNLESS OTHERWISE PROVIDED:**
  - **Add (IX) Guidance Counselor (currently well understaffed within most school systems at 250:1 ratio**
- ❖ **7-103, page 119, Remove Half-day Programs from Grant Eligibility** - MEC supports providing school districts have funding to meet increased enrollment in age appropriate facilities (Number/height of bathrooms, sinks)
- ❖ **8-201, page 142, Gifted and Talented Pathway** - (2) EACH LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM SHALL DEVELOP ACCELERATED PATHWAYS AND ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS TO ACHIEVE COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS **BY 3<sup>RD</sup> GRADE AND** BEFORE THE END OF THE 10TH GRADE.
  - **Add Language consistent with COMAR REGULATION 13A.04.07 Gifted and Talented Education**

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<sup>1</sup> The Federal ESSA requires at least 13 times using a variety of language requiring at the state and local level **“Meaningful Stakeholder Consultation in the Decision-making Process”** and additionally breaks down the makeup of the stakeholders by major category. In addition, there is additional language within the [Maryland Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) Consolidated State Plan Final](#) (Search **“Stakeholder”** or **“Engagement”**)

Source: [Council of Chief State School Officers \(CCSSO\)](#) including [ESSA Implementation Considerations: Stakeholder Engagement](#) [ESSA Implementation Considerations: Stakeholder Engagement](#)