

Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities

**SENATE BUDGET & TAXATION AND EDUCATION, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
COMMITTEES**

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS AND WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEES

SENATE BILL 1000/HOUSE BILL 1300: BLUEPRINT FOR MARYLAND'S FUTURE--IMPLEMENTATION

FEBRUARY 17, 2020

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities (EAC), a coalition of more than 25 organizations and individuals concerned with education policy for students with disabilities in Maryland, submits this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 1000/House Bill 1300, which would legislate the implementation of the recommendations made by the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education, informally known as the Kirwan Commission. This sweeping legislation, if enacted, will completely change the nature of public education in Maryland for years to come by addressing funding inequity, mandating expanded preschool services, requiring behavioral health services with a recognition of the need for trauma-informed care, addressing teacher training issues, and creating an accountability structure that was missing from previous efforts to overhaul the state's education funding structure.

We appreciate the recognition that in order to stay on track for college and career readiness, a world-class educational system will require additional supports and services for students with disabilities. Many students with disabilities also belong to families who are low income and families where English is not the primary language--also groups identified as requiring additional resources. EAC members are glad to see the provision in Section 5-225 (House Bill) requiring each school to use the funds provided under the section to provide the services provided by each student's individualized education program or Section 504 plan. It is our hope that as this process unfolds, the General Assembly will require school districts to use these funds to supplement the funds they already receive for special education, not to supplant them, as a number of school districts did last year after receiving additional special education funding from the General Assembly.

EAC members strongly support the expansion of public preschool slots to include children with disabilities regardless of family income and the inclusion of students with disabilities as a structural element of preschool program quality. When children with disabilities have the opportunity to attend school with their peers without disabilities from the earliest age, all children benefit. Given the importance of intervening early to address developmental delays and disabilities, it is important to provide funding for the infants and toddlers program, which has been level-funded since Fiscal Year 2009. It is also important to ensure funding for students with disabilities in state-funded education programs, such as those within the Juvenile Services facilities.

We are glad to see that the Accountability and Implementation Board will be required to consider stakeholder input into the implementation plan for the Blueprint. We are also glad that the Blueprint addresses teacher preparation; so many of the issues faced by the families represented or served by EAC

members are the result of school staff who do not have sufficient training to meet the needs of the children with disabilities in their classrooms.

We applaud the Maryland General Assembly for putting forth this extraordinary legislation and reiterate our strong support for SB 1000/HB 1300. For more information, please contact Leslie Seid Margolis, Chairperson, at 410-727-6352, ext. 2505 or at lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org.

Respectfully submitted,

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