

**TO:** Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

**BILL:** Senate Bill (SB) 161 – Community Schools – Alterations

**DATE:** January 24, 2024

**POSITION:** Support

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**Chair Guzzone and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee,**

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) would like to express our support for **SB 161**, which proposes that Local Education Agencies (LEAs) with 1 to 39 Community Schools may expend, on behalf of community schools, up to 10% of the funds received through the Concentration of Poverty grant program. The proposed change enables LEAs with fewer than 40 schools eligible for the Concentration of Poverty grant, to centrally manage a portion of the funds. LEAs with fewer than 40 community schools have explained the need for some funding at the central office level to better support community schools.

This option will address this need and create opportunities to secure goods and services for several schools at a lower cost. LEAs are accountable for the faithful implementation of the Concentration of Poverty grant program, which includes ensuring that each eligible school has a community school coordinator, has full-time coverage by at least one health care practitioner during school hours, and implements wraparound services. LEAs must meet these requirements and submit a plan to the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB). LEAs with 40 or more community schools already have the option to manage up to 50% of the Concentration of Poverty grant funds centrally.

SB 161 requires the creation and mandatory use of a common needs assessment tool for community schools that will require MSDE approval. A standardized, mandatory format for these assessments will yield uniform and comprehensive data for MSDE, streamlining the review process. The requirement for MSDE approval will increase the provision of detailed feedback and when necessary, modifications to the needs assessment and the implementation plans. Community school implementation plans must also be approved by MSDE. MSDE will be able to make modifications before approval, ensuring a more cohesive and effective implementation strategy.

SB 161 requires community schools to revisit their needs assessments and update their implementation plans every three years. In any given year, 150 to 180 community schools will be doing this review. This cycle of continuous evaluation and improvement is essential for the responsive growth of the initiative.

In FY 2024, there are 454 community schools in 22 LEAs receiving Concentration of Poverty grants. There are three LEAs with 40 or more community schools. MSDE projects that there will be over 550 community schools in FY 2027.

The State Board and MSDE request a favorable committee report on **SB 161**. Please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne, Executive Director of Government Affairs, Education Policy, and Government Relations, at [Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov](mailto:Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov) or at 410-767-0504 or Zach Hands, Executive Director of the State Board, at [Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov](mailto:Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov) or at 443-915-6094, if you would like any additional information.