



**Board of Education of Howard County  
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland House of Delegates,  
Ways and Means Committee  
March 27, 2024**

**Board of Education  
of Howard County**

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**SB1102: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS  
Education – Blueprint for Maryland’s Future – Alterations**

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **SB1102 Education – Blueprint for Maryland’s Future – Alterations** with amendments to incorporate additional early childhood education provisions from other proposed bills, to add an inflationary adjustment to the minimum Maintenance of Effort (MOE), and to extend deadlines for the adoption of local career ladders and minimum school funding.

Touching on several areas of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future statute, SB1102 has amended language that will benefit school systems as we work to implement with fidelity. Specifically, the Board supports the following pieces of SB1102:

- With the initial implementation delays to date, an independent evaluation of the State’s progress towards implementation under the original dates would provide a negative framing for the legislature, thus the later date proposed under SB1102 for this evaluation would be more reflective of progress.
- The bill allows a teacher with a bachelor’s degree who plans to pursue certification for teaching in early childhood education to meet the qualifications of the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant to create flexibility in available teachers as prekindergarten is built up to meet expanded capacity.
- Under Education Articles §§ 5-230 and 9.5-1002, SB1102 allows Judy Centers and Patty Centers to use funding for planning and development in the first year if granted a multiyear award. Having available funding to hire staff that could plan and develop Center expansions in Howard County is supported as an allowable use to pursue this model.
- The bill also adds early childhood educators who are employed by public or private eligible providers to those qualified to receive loan assistance under the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment program. The Board supports this provision to expand the program to additional school system employees.
- Related to non-classroom teachers, defined under SB1102 as a position in a school for which, if the individual earns National Board Certification (NBC), the individual is eligible to join the career ladder including assistant principals, principals, administrators, and instructional specialists, the bill allows these positions to qualify for initial completion and renewal NBC fees paid by the State. This will incentivize the pursuit of NBC by the additional professions, which is an intent of the Blueprint.

- Lastly, SB1102 extends the date for the CTE Committee to set annual statewide goals to reach 45% for the percentage of high school students who, prior to graduation, complete the high school level of a registered apprenticeship or an industry-recognized occupational credential. The statutory deadline of December 1, 2022, would be amended to June 1, 2024, to catch up to current anticipated timelines.

As you consider amendments made to SB1102 before passage by the Senate, as well as your own amendments to HB1426, there are many Blueprint related topics that local school systems are looking for support to include in legislation this session. For instance, while not currently included in SB1102, early childhood education proposals from other bills that could be beneficial if amended into SB1102 include:

- From SB1062/HB1432: The extension of dates by which private providers must account for 50% of prekindergarten slots to SY2030 (currently SY2027).
- From SB1062/HB1432: The extension of the date that all eligible prekindergarten providers must include structural elements as outlined in the Blueprint to SY2031 (currently SY2028).
- From HB1381: The requirement for MSDE to forward fund the state and local share to eligible private prekindergarten providers or provide a pay guarantee of not more than 30 days.

Many bills introduced also focus on ways to create pathways for private providers to meet the teaching expectations of early childhood education under the Blueprint. While well intentioned, staff cautions against programs and requirements that put additional burdens on local school systems to provide support, monitoring, and mentoring given the already overburdened resources of early childhood offices. A study found under SB0984 to review the feasibility of providing publicly funded prekindergarten and address many of the issues brought forward by bills on this topic to date could be beneficial to stakeholders.

The programmatic aspirations found in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future mirror the mission set by the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) to ensure academic success and social-emotional well-being for each student in an inclusive and nurturing environment that closes opportunity gaps. As we are approaching the third full year since the passage of the Blueprint and many major pieces of implementation are on the horizon, despite a significant infusion of new revenue, the topic of adequate funding to meet the statutory mandates has been prevalent in budget discussions across the state and locally in Howard County.

To this end, HCPSS strongly supports the amendments proposed by the Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) to add an inflation adjustment to the MOE amount of local funding under Education Article § 5-235. While not the full extent of the Board's legislative priority to incorporate the per pupil funding increases outlined in the Blueprint to be used as the baseline calculation of required increases in the MOE funding, this amendment would ensure that local funding is at least keeping pace with inflation, a requirement already in place for State funding. The burden, however, cannot only fall to local funding authorities as the State has a responsibility to continually monitor the adequacy of funding to meet the mandates passed in legislation, and increase funding when necessary. Without a more robust statutory fix, HCPSS will be

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saddled with a funding formula that does not mandate the required funding increases sufficient to support the Blueprint implementation.

A second legislative priority for Howard County related to Blueprint is support for altering statutory deadlines quickly approaching on July 1, 2024. The requirements to adopt local career ladders and minimum school funding by this date will both have wide-ranging impacts for school systems as well as the overall success of the goals of the Blueprint. School systems also face financial ramifications if deemed non-compliant by the State. Staff recommends an amendment to SB1102 to extend these deadlines to at least July 1, 2025, to allow for a phased-in approach as guidance becomes available from our governing bodies. While the career ladder implementation is being addressed by the AIB in recent guidance, minimum school funding still poses a significant challenge. Uniform reporting standards to associate Minimum School Fund revenues with school system expenditures, distribution of the local share for counties such as Howard where MOE and Above MOE are not defined in the Minimum School Fund, and waiver parameters to understand how exceptions will be applied, are yet to be developed.

With these amendments, we urge a FAVORABLE report of SB1102 from this Committee.