

Appropriations Committee
Ways and Means Committee
Briefing on COVID–19 Issues
Thursday, June 11th, 2020
1:00pm

I. Call to Order and Opening Remarks

II. Maryland State Department of Education

Dr. Karen B. Salmon, State Superintendent

Brigadier General Warner I. Sumpter, President, Board of Education

III. Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland

Dr. Kelly Griffith, President

Dr. Sonja Santelises, CEO Baltimore City Schools

IV. Maryland Association of Boards of Education

Martha James– Hassan, President, Baltimore City

Julie Hummer, MABE Legislative Committee Chair, Anne Arundel Co.

Mavis Ellis, Legislative Committee Vice Chair, Howard County

V. Maryland State Education Association

Cheryl Bost, President

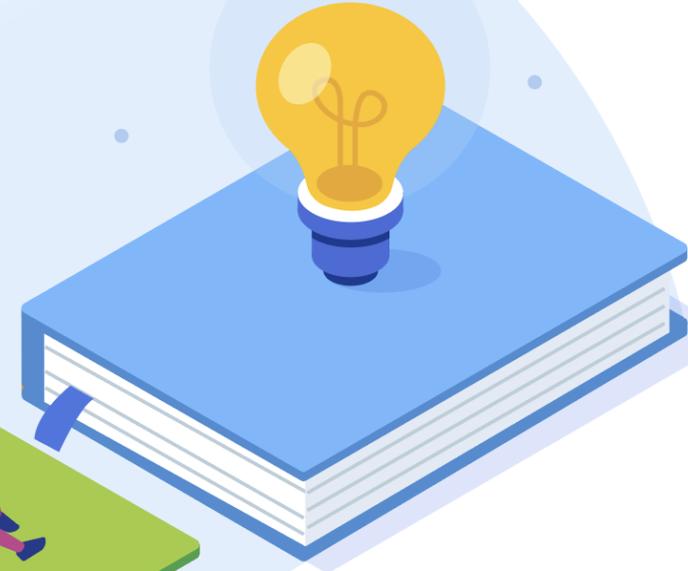
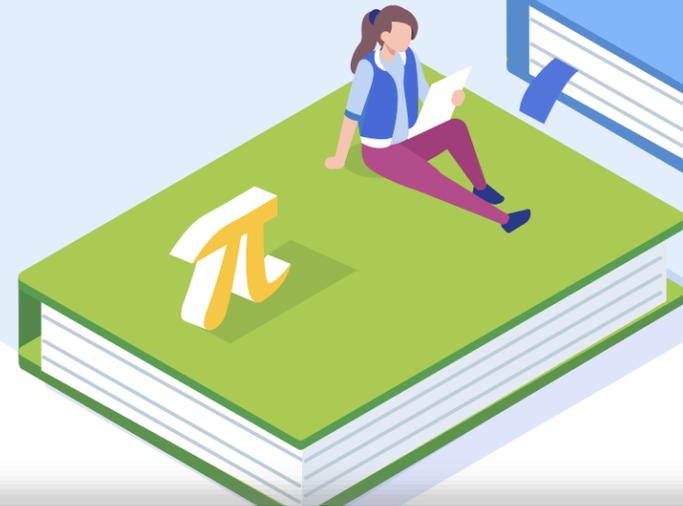
Sean Johnson, Assistant Executive Director of Political and Legislative Affairs

VI. Baltimore Teachers Union

Cristina Duncan Evans, Teacher Chapter Chair BTU Executive Board

VII. Closing Remarks

Maryland State Department of Education Briefing



House Appropriations and Ways and Means Committees
June 11, 2020

Presented By
Dr. Karen B. Salmon
State Superintendent of Schools

MSDE's Coordination and Communication

MSDE has maintained weekly or bi-weekly calls with local CFOs, assistant superintendents for instruction, and CTE coordinators

MSDE has maintained weekly calls with local superintendents and the leadership of the State Board



Ongoing communication with the Department of Health and health experts advising the Governor and other state agencies

THE RECOVERY PLAN FOR EDUCATION – PURPOSE AND GOALS

In April 2020, the MSDE began to develop a plan to address the eventual reopening of schools, with an understanding that the health, safety, and wellness of students, families, educators, and staff must be a priority.

The ESSA stakeholder group was reactivated to serve as the **Recovery Plan Stakeholder Group**.

- The stakeholder group has convened twice and most recently met last week.

The Recovery Plan addresses (among other things):

- some requirements for re-opening and re-engagement
- additional health and safety requirements

The Recovery Plan should be used as guidelines/point of reference for school leaders, students, and school communities.



BENCHMARKS FOR OPENING SCHOOLS

The Recovery Plan includes specific requirements for reopening school - these requirements must be included in Local Recovery Plans. Below are some examples local school systems must include in their Local Recovery Plan:

- Local school systems must have their recovery plans completed and posted to their websites by August 14.
- Each local school system's equity plan must be reflected throughout the recovery plan.
- Each local school system must establish a recovery plan stakeholder group.
- Schools must determine where their students are instructionally, identify gaps in learning, and prepare a path for instructional success and recovery.
- Each local school system must follow IDEA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and Title II of the ADA.
- Each local school system must follow procedures and guidance for an individual who tests positive for COVID-19.
- Each local school system must follow safety protocols in relation to cleaning and nutrition.
- Each local school system must follow protocols for safely transporting students to and from school.
- Each local school system must develop a system for tracking attendance when students are engaged.

CONTINUITY OF LEARNING PLANS

Each school system has submitted continuity of learning plans that address how they will maintain instruction and continue to provide learning opportunities to students during a period of distance learning.

Each plan includes:

- overall description of how they will deliver continuity of learning to all students
- their distance learning platforms
- the technology they have available
- how they will accommodate students who do not have access to a device or the internet



CONTINUITY OF LEARNING PLANS (CONTINUED)

- ✓ Each plan has descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of district staff, school administrators, teachers, instructional assistants, students and parents, as well as a plan of accountability. Additionally, each plan identifies how the local school system will monitor and assess student performance and consider grading moving forward.
- ✓ Each plan also considers how the local school system will address equity as well as how to provide critical services to special education students, English Learners, Students with Academic Needs, Homeless Students and Gifted Students.
- ✓ All local school systems have posted their plans to their website and they are also posted on MSDE's website.

ADDRESSING THE SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL NEEDS OF STUDENTS

MSDE staff have been **conducting regular “check-in” meetings with student services personnel** to facilitate sharing of best practices.

In collaboration with the Maryland School Counselor Association and higher education school counseling programs, **MSDE is in the process of having school counselors from across the State create classroom guidance lessons for students.**

The MSDE has created a workgroup to **develop state-specific resources and materials to address the social-emotional needs of students and staff.**

School systems are planning on **implementing the use of restorative practices and mindfulness strategies** to address the social-emotional needs of students.

Every continuity of learning plan was required to have an **equity component**, and with the passage of the equity regulation this past year that requires an equity lens be placed on decisions made at the State and local level there are a lot of tools at our disposal. **Each school system has developed their own equity plans.**

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (MCAP)
A Quick Guide to Understanding MCAP

The Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) provides information to educators, parents and the public on student progress towards proficiency on the Maryland state content standards. Through a strong assessment system, stakeholders gain an understanding of how schools are performing and where assistance can be directed to support student growth and achievement.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that states administer annual statewide assessments to all students in English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics in grades 3-8 and once in high school, as well as in science once in each grade span (3-5, 6-8 and high school), and annual English language proficiency assessments in grades K-12 for all English learners. Maryland also provides Alternate Assessments written to the Alternate Standards for those students who require this accommodation. Additionally, the majority of Maryland kindergarteners are administered the KRA to determine their readiness for kindergarten.

Please see the table below for a listing of Maryland state assessments.



	Mathematics	English Language Arts/Literacy	Science	Social Studies
GENERAL EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mathematics 3-8 Algebra I Geometry Algebra II 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ELA/L 3-8, 10 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MISA 5* MISA 8* HS MISA* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Studies 8 Government
ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alt Mathematics 3-8, 11 Alt English Language Arts/ Literacy 3-8, 11 Alt MISA 5, 8, 11 Alt ACCESS for ELLs 1-12 			
ENGLISH LEARNERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACCESS for ELLs K-12 			
EARLY CHILDHOOD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) 			

* Maryland Integrated Science Assessment

 For additional information about the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program, see: www.marylandpublicschools.org/aboutMCAP
7.2019 v.2

CONTINGENCY PLANS



We continue to **support the bolstering of distance and online learning and training** to improve its delivery throughout Summer 2020.

Stakeholders have worked to greatly expand the capabilities necessary to revert to a full online learning model if necessary.

FUNDING AND OTHER RESOURCES



The CARES Act had several buckets of funding within an Education Stabilization Fund, including the **\$207 million for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund**, at least 90% of that money goes directly to local school systems.



MSDE may retain up to 10% or approximately \$20 million to be used for emergency needs as determined by the MSDE to address issues related to COVID-19



Included in the CARES Act was **\$45.5 million for the Child Care Development Block Grant**. This funding was used to help support the Essential Personnel Child Care Program.



Maryland was also awarded approximately \$45.7 million for the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund. These dollars support school districts, institutions of higher education and other education related entities.

NEXT STEPS

Maryland's Recovery Plan is a working document – information is gathered and reviewed as it becomes available.

MSDE is reviewing all feedback received since the release of the Recovery Plan.

MSDE will continue to share and gather recommendations from the ESSA External Stakeholder Committee/Recovery Plan Committee



A close-up, high-angle shot of a diverse group of children looking upwards with joyful expressions. The children have various ethnicities and hair colors. A blue rectangular text box is centered over the image, containing the text 'Building A Future that is for Everyone' in white. The background is bright and slightly blurred, suggesting an outdoor or well-lit indoor setting.

**Building A
Future**

that
is for **Everyone**



June 3, 2020

The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones
Speaker of the House of Delegates
H-101, State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Eric G. Luedtke
Majority Leader
50 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser
Chair, Ways & Means Committee
131 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Ben Barnes
Chairman, Education Subcommittee (APP)
151 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Maggie McIntosh
Chair, Appropriations Committee
121 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Alonzo T. Washington
Vice Chair, Ways & Means Committee
131 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Sent via email

Dear Speaker Jones and House of Delegates Education Leaders:

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts and plans as we move into the next phase of delivering education in these unprecedented times. Your letter demonstrates the Legislature's firm grasp on the current challenges facing school systems.

Our responses here represent a fraction of the daily challenges we face. In addition to this letter, we welcome the opportunity to present to the Joint Covid-19 Response Legislative Workgroup, or any other legislative committee as a continuation of the dialogue and successful partnership we have with the General Assembly. We appreciate your patience thus far as we race toward the end of the school year addressing the most immediate concerns, such as the distribution of instructional materials and devices, determining grading policies, and planning for graduation.

As soon as the State Superintendent announced that we would not return to school for the remainder of the year, we moved quickly into the next stage of continuity of learning and recovery planning. Throughout this crisis, our partners at every level have been working together daily to discuss challenges and share best practices. There are weekly calls and meetings between superintendents, chief financial officers, transportation directors, food service directors, human resource directors, school attorneys, and a coalition of advocacy groups. This cooperation has been invaluable. While there is not a one-size-fits-all solution, there has been a



strong emphasis on creating as much consistency as possible across the state on any number of policy implications.

Since the March closure, our top priority has been keeping students engaged and delivering education in the most equitable manner possible. As we turn to recovery planning, school systems are facing simultaneous challenges – closing out the FY 2020 school year, preparing for summer recovery/learning, and planning for the uncertain FY 2021 school year. We can assure you that every concern and query in your letter is also being contemplated at the local and state levels. Every day we continue to vet and research innovative and research-based initiatives for the continuity of learning and recovery and we greatly appreciate your thoughtful suggestions and feedback.

Recovery Planning

Representing the State’s leading education organizations, we were invited to review the first draft of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) guidelines for statewide education recovery planning, “Maryland Together - Maryland Recovery Plan for Education - Response to Covid-19 and a Pathway Forward.” While this Plan is still in draft form and awaiting further stakeholder engagement, it does provide some education recovery strategies and options, but it is far from complete. The recovery plan provides guidance on issues such as school calendars and course scheduling, delivery of instruction and assessments, meeting the needs of our special education students, teacher, staff and student supports including mental and behavioral health, and professional development for teachers, principals, and other staff. Importantly, the guidance recognizes the local decisions of health officers and public safety officials.

In addition, all twenty-four systems are engaged in planning with local stakeholders. These efforts are proceeding rapidly and it is expected that many plans will be presented to local boards for discussion and approval in the near future. At the same time, MSDE is continuing to update their guidelines and we are moving on parallel tracks at the state and local levels.

As actions move from theoretical to actual, it will be critical to have the administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders at the local, building, and classroom level empowered to make the tough implementation decisions. The stakeholders on this letter are committed to working together to ensure reopening conversations include and respect those diverse voices and points of view. We also believe our local collaboratives can handle issues unaddressed by the MSDE reopening document, including, but not limited to:

- Closing out the 2019-2020 academic and work year for students and employees;
- Summer supports and preparation for the 2020-2021 school year; and
- Action preparedness once schools reopen, including protocols when a student or staff member is sick with a suspected or confirmed case.



Additionally, we collectively recognize that accomplishing this increased diversified instruction will require negotiations between employees and employers and more staff and resources than currently budgeted. Some of those needs are outlined later in this letter.

We will need to rapidly shift traditional operations, logistics, and planning in a wide range of areas that extend beyond the work that goes on in classrooms between students and their teachers. While each school system has their own professional development process, there are several common focus areas.

In planning for physical reentry into school buildings, the *existing capacity* to accommodate student populations within the guidelines is a top priority. For instance, in order to adhere to social distancing requirements, it is possible that a high school may not be able to house its entire student body, even with a split schedule. School systems are examining and measuring buildings to consider space constraints.

Without question, all systems are planning for, and will adhere to the highest *sanitation and public safety standards* to protect our staff, students and school communities. To this end, we are in constant communication with our local health departments to identify best practices for reentry into the buildings. We are hopeful that the Maryland Department of Health will play a vital leadership role and provide clear *statewide* guidance and protocols to reassure the public that the highest level of protections are in place for all Maryland schoolchildren.

Transportation planning is a particularly difficult task. We are addressing the challenges of all forms of transportation, including school buses and public transportation to ensure equitable access for every student. In order to adhere to appropriate social distancing, some of our early calculations show that a traditional 60-person school bus may be able to accommodate only 10-14 students at a time. That calculation is further complicated by the possibility of multiple runs per day, accommodating families with children in different grade levels, and additional cleaning requirements. Multiple daily runs may be prohibitive in rural areas given the vast geography of those districts. Public transit is an equally difficult challenge for social distancing.

Each LEA's commitment and dedication to *food service* cannot be overstated. We could not be prouder of our dedicated staff members who have been on the front lines serving students, families and communities since the beginning of this pandemic. These efforts have gone above and beyond the normal expectations for school systems, especially as many of our instruction materials are also distributed at these sites. In some locations, we have also become the default social service agents and front line "helpers" taking on expanded family and senior meal delivery. This has been an extraordinary *unbudgeted* endeavor. The uncertainty of the continuation of this high level of service is a major concern from a budget perspective, including staff burnout. To be clear, we would not change anything about our outreach efforts; however, we are at a point where we must plan and budget for this heightened service model if continued into the summer and fall.



Continuity of Learning

Each school system has created comprehensive plans for the continuity of learning which can be found on MSDE’s COVID-19 webpage. As we move into the summer of 2020, it is important to recognize that it will look much different than traditional “summer school.” For most systems, summer learning will be focused on credit recovery for the upper grades and skills enhancement/reinforcement across all grades. We are extremely hopeful that the Governor’s recovery plan will allow for the assembly of small groups of students and teachers during the summer. This is especially important for students in Pre-Kindergarten through second grade who have been more difficult to engage during this early learning development phase. These students are particularly at risk of learning loss without physical proximity to teachers. The same is true for other special populations, such as English language learners and students with IEPs and special needs.

At this time, multiple recovery plans are under consideration – some contemplate a full return to school, some assume continued distance learning for a few months into the fall, or a hybrid model. In addition, it is likely that within an individual system there will be different plans and platforms for elementary, middle, and high school students. We are also eager to work with MSDE as they explore the option of “virtual schools” for those students and teachers who may not be physically able to return to school buildings. Nevertheless, educators know synchronous learning would be essential for all students to be able to master the Maryland State Standards as well as be prepared for college and career. While all of these are complex in their own making, the uncertainty about returning to school buildings is the biggest challenge.

Working Together with the Legislature

Your offer of partnership is greatly appreciated. At this time, we are still in the “discovery” stage and facing new challenges every day. Moving forward, our most obvious need will be increased funding, especially if we add instructional time to the traditional school year, which we believe is crucial.

We are not tone deaf to the economic upheaval facing the state and the nation, and we are not questioning the Legislature’s commitment to education. Boards of Education, superintendents and school employees all appreciate your role as fiscal stewards and we understand the delicate balance of funding priorities during this national crisis. But we must fulfill our constitutional responsibility to provide the most equitable and adequate education for Maryland’s students and families. Without a doubt, this will demand a strong partnership with the Legislature and the Governor and will not only require more creativity and flexibility, but also more financial resources.



We need your and Governor Hogan’s help, with supplemental funding in FY ’21 and resources beyond, to fund existing formula and categorical funding. We also hope to work with all parties to override the veto of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future legislation; this veto has created a significant complication as we budget for the next two years. While Kirwan funding was never a guarantee, the last two years of “bridge” funding and enhancements are well ensconced in our budgets. With the Governor’s veto, these Blueprint funds will “expire” as of fiscal 2022. The expectation was the new funding formula would kick in during fiscal 2022, covering individual programmatic enhancements, such as the teacher salary challenge and increased funding for targeted populations. These uncertainties in funding and potential policy changes have placed school systems in a very precarious position. We are seeking your assistance, along with Governor Hogan about extending this “bridge” funding for one more year into fiscal 2022.

To augment state funds, we also propose working together in our federal advocacy efforts. We are hopeful that a united front will result in similar education stabilization funding provided in the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Individual local Boards of Education can pass resolutions, the General Assembly can sign joint leadership letters, and Governor Hogan can continue to use his position with the National Governors’ Association to support the efforts of Senators Cardin and Van Hollen and the entire U.S. Senate to support the HEROES Act, or, at least some compromise level of stimulus that provides education stabilization funds to state and local governments for at least FY21 and FY22. We are all in this together and we believe it will require our joint advocacy to successfully deliver desperately needed federal funds.

In addition to the uncertainty of existing funding, we are beginning to calculate potential recovery costs. We are all now aware of the deficiencies in our distance learning programs so there will be new and continued costs associated with devices, new learning management systems and significant professional development that is needed for our teachers. This crisis will shape the delivery of public education in ways the Kirwan Commission did not contemplate and we need to address these needs and costs in the short term, while remaining committed to the long-term and achievable vision of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future.

We anticipate two specific financial needs – increased personnel costs as we renegotiate contracts and funds to backfill food service deficits. As you are aware, our food service programs are enterprise activities and largely funded by federal reimbursements. We are continuing to work with these federal programs to maximize our reimbursements; however, we are still projecting significant deficits that will be difficult to backfill, largely due to federal prohibitions about using general operating funds to do so.

The personnel costs noted above are largely unknown, but they should be a part of our considerations. There may be expanded or different working schedules, we will need to budget more professional development and collaboration and planning time. It is also possible that we will need to increase the number of sanitation workers and other classroom personnel to support healthy and safe smaller learning environments. And, not to be forgotten are the additional mental health services that must be a priority for students and staff alike; wellness plans and



employee assistance programs (EAPs) will play a prominent role in our negotiations. Prior to this crisis, Maryland has been dealing with annual teacher shortages for years. We need to make sure we are supporting and retaining our staff during this time of high stress, high expectations and rapid change.

Beyond the immediate budget considerations, we will need other legislative help. While it is not an exhaustive list, we note two special issues. The first is a change to the date we “count” student enrollment as the foundation for the funding formulas. Currently, enrollment as of September 30th is the basis for the following fiscal year’s per pupil funding. We are gravely concerned about enrollment counts for September 30, 2020, as well as the October 30th date for “counting” special populations including special education, ELL and at-risk students. Many systems are already seeing a drop in enrollment for the fall given concerns families have expressed about physically returning to school buildings. The Legislature could help either by adjusting the date for a final enrollment count, or, preferably, using a “greater of” formula or a rolling three-year average as has been adopted in many other pieces of education funding.

Lastly, we will need the Legislature’s voice and support in the public conversation as we re-open schools - reassuring the safety of our facilities and the importance of public education to your constituents.

As a result of the closure of schools, many traditional school practices have been upended, but we are laser-focused on our students. Public education is our passion and it is imperative that we remove any obstacles in a student’s educational journey.

Thank you again for your outreach and know we will continue to work in partnership as we navigate these unprecedented times to keep Maryland strong.

Sincerely,

Kelly L. Griffith, Ed.D.
President, PSSAM

Dr. Martha James-Hassan
President, MABE

cc: Dr. Karen Salmon, Superintendent, MSDE
Brigadier General Warner I. Sumpter, Ret., President, Maryland State Board of Education
Cheryl Bost, President, MSEA
Diamonté Brown, President, BTU
Frances Hughes Glendening, Executive Director, MABE
Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

Martha James-Hassan, MABE President

Statement to the House Ways and Means and Appropriations Committee

Briefing on Education Issues Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic

June 11, 2020

I am Martha James-Hassan, a member of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners, and MABE's President.

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures and demand for system-wide distance learning has accentuated the need for educational equity, and to embrace the use of an equity lens in adopting policies and holding our selves accountable for educating each student.

Fortunately, our excellent school meals programs and staff rallied to meet the nutritional needs of all of our students, with a built-in emphasis on serving the students and families who need it most. By contrast, distance learning, especially access to the internet and devices at home, was not already supported by divisions of staff and targeted federal funding. This inequitable situation or "pre-existing condition" has required new and unbudgeted investments, community and home outreach, and professional development for teachers asked to do a job that neither college nor professional development ever prepared them for.

True educational equity for our students means having remote access to high quality teaching and learning, at least until it is safe for all students to return to classrooms. But educational equity also demands that we invest in the extra time and resources, whether online or in-person, to make up for the lost instruction that is unfairly burdening our "at promise" students. Achieving educational equity calls on us to stand firm on our funding commitments, and demand rigor in adhering to the equity policies that drive the programs and practices to meet our students' educational and social emotional needs in these deeply traumatic times.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future envisioned us being able to transform public education by allocating increased funding in much more equitable and empowering ways. This is the future we need to continue to work toward. Thank you for this opportunity to emphasize the critical role educational equity must have in transforming the lives of our students and our communities. This pandemic should be a "reason to" not a "reason not to" make the changes we know are needed.

Julie Hummer, MABE Legislative Committee Chair
Statement to the House Ways and Means and Appropriations Committee
Briefing on Education Issues Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic
June 11, 2020

I am Julie Hummer, a member of the Anne Arundel County Board of Education, and MABE's Legislative Committee Chair.

The economic crisis resulting from the COVID-19 public health crisis is driving forecasts of staggering amounts of lost state and local revenue for public education. Maryland's 24 local school systems are fiscally dependent on federal, State and local funding through mandated formulas, grants, and the local maintenance of effort requirement. This is the bedrock on which our programs and payrolls are built.

Limited federal funding has been provided but much more will be needed until state and local revenues return. Costs arising from unexpected demands for student meal services, educational technology and connectivity, and personnel are being met, but these costs are not sustainable. There is simply not enough funding to support either a total distance learning system, or a blended system of distance learning and returning to school. One major reason for this is that we know that distance learning is not perfectly accessible, or as effective as classroom instruction even when it is accessed. This lost time and value of teaching and learning will require more time and resources to make up. Other cost factors include transportation of fewer students per bus, lower capacity of schools and classrooms, and investments in equipment – from thermometers to air filters.

MABE has led many years of advocacy for the Blueprint for Maryland's Future passed in March and then vetoed. We so much appreciate your support for investments in our operating and capital budgets, including the Built to Learn Act. We know the value of meaningful policy advances in areas such as teacher pay and career ladders, community schools, wraparound services, trauma informed approaches, tutoring and targeted interventions, and behavioral health services.

Sadly, realizing the potential of these programs to transform the educational experiences for our students will remain out of reach without the accompanying state and local funding, or at the very least federal stabilization funding to prevent draconian cuts as our economy recovers.

Thank you for this opportunity to emphasize the critical role that federal, state and local funding play in making a high quality public education possible for each student as school systems grapple with new challenges in extremely uncertain times.

Mavis Ellis, MABE Legislative Committee Vice Chair
Statement to the House Ways and Means and Appropriations Committee
Briefing on Education Issues Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic
June 11, 2020

I am Mavis Ellis, chair of the Howard County Board of Education, and vice chair of MABE's Legislative Committee.

The COVID-19 pandemic is highlighting that school board governance is about adopting sound policies and delegating certain decision-making to your superintendent and administrative team, and communicating clearly with students, parents, and the larger community on how we are doing – and where we can do better. Providing clarity (for ourselves let alone our parents) is frustrated and tested every day by the uncertainties surrounding school closures and safe re-openings, the equity and funding concerns already discussed by my colleagues, and the very diverse, and adverse, circumstances of our students, families, and communities.

MABE believes we best serve our communities and students through a balance of allowing local flexibility to adopt priorities and pursue new initiatives, but also adhering to uniform statewide standards on behalf of each student. Geography and economic circumstance should not determine a child's future.

Yes, local boards cherish and guard the local board governance role, but we also recognize the imperative for statewide standards from MSDE and, particularly in the case of COVID-19, from the Maryland Department of Health. As our joint letter with the superintendents' association states, we look forward to ongoing communication and collaboration with your committees and other state leaders toward the goal of achieving clarity on the many complex and unprecedented decisions that must be made in the weeks and months ahead. Our students, families, and staff deserve as clear a roadmap as we can provide.

Thank you for this opportunity to emphasize the critical role of local board governance and community engagement, particularly in these times of unprecedented uncertainty.

MARYLAND STATE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

**BRIEFING ON EDUCATION ISSUES
RELATED TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

CHERYL BOST AND SEAN JOHNSON



**DISTANCE
LEARNING
WHAT
WORKED**

**Meal
distribution**

**School closure
timing**

**Proactive MOUs
in some districts**

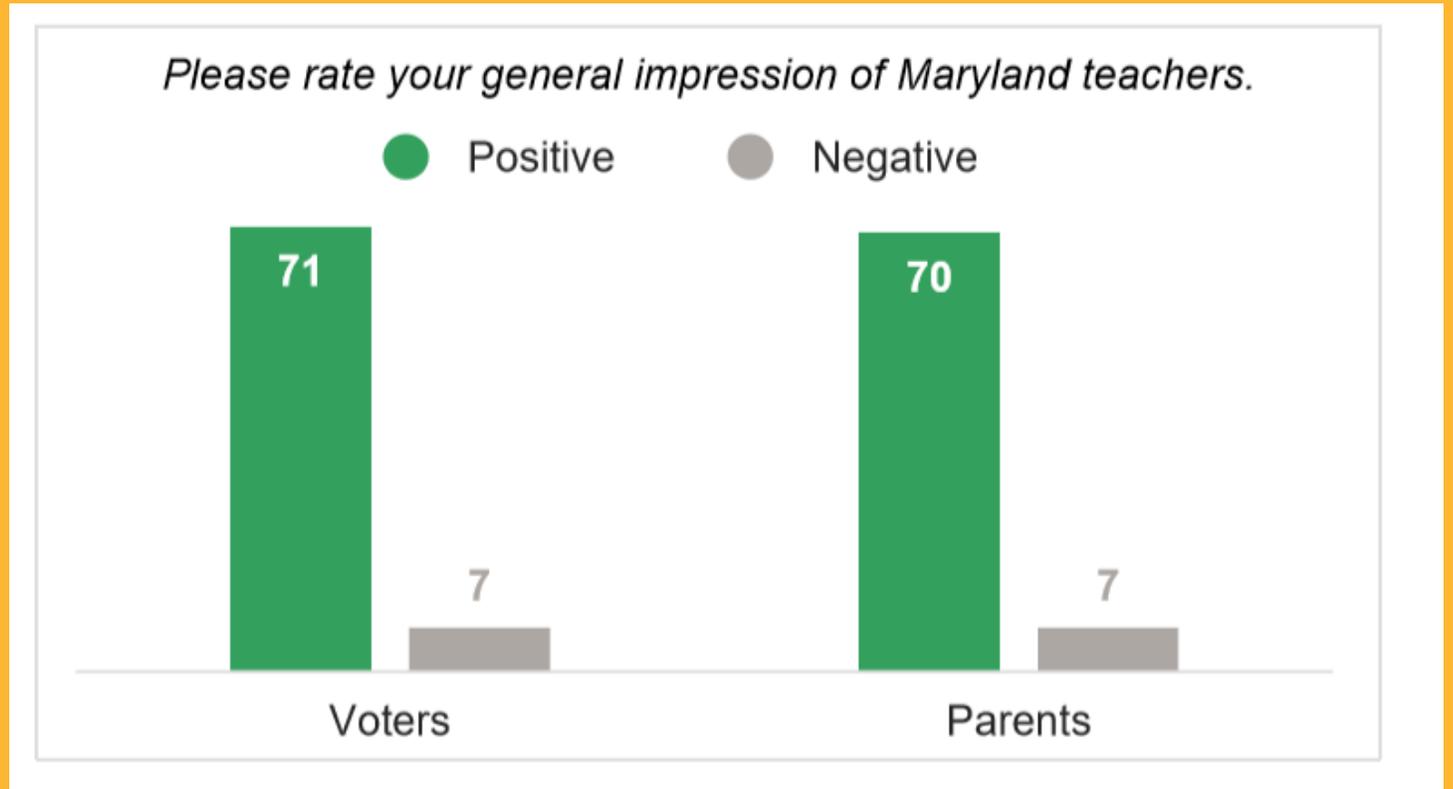
**Educator
appreciation
and support**



POLL FINDINGS

Positive impression of teachers

Important for school employees to continue to get paid while school buildings are closed



DISTANCE LEARNING NEEDS IMPROVEMENT



**Coordination
with
stakeholders**



**Communication
to schools,
employees,
families, and
students**



**Meaningful
and
actionable
data**

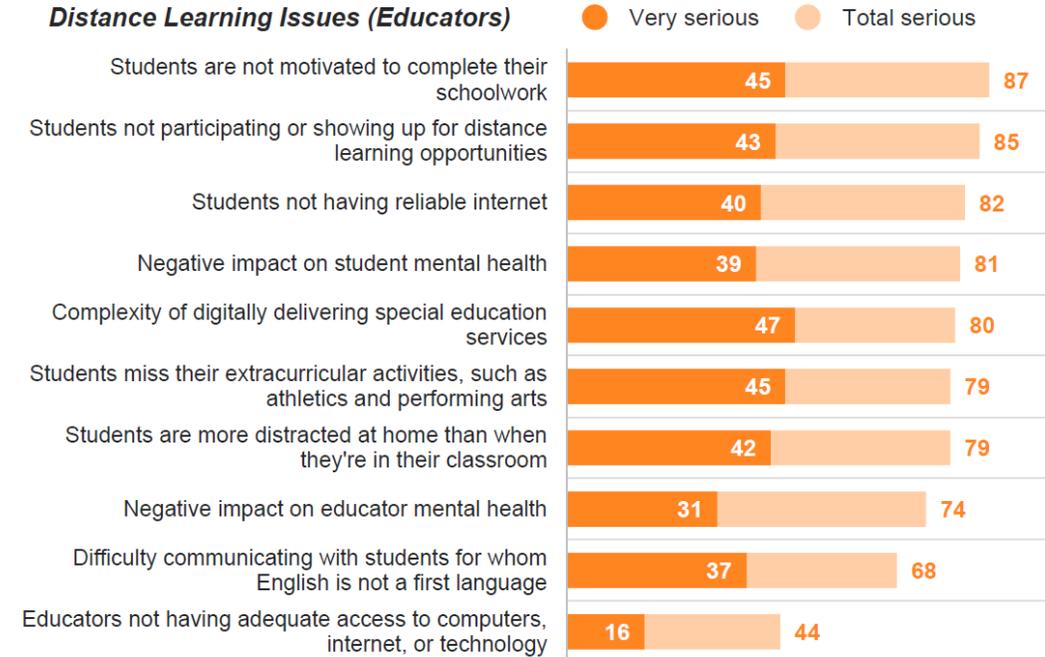


**Reliable
technology
and
1:1 devices**

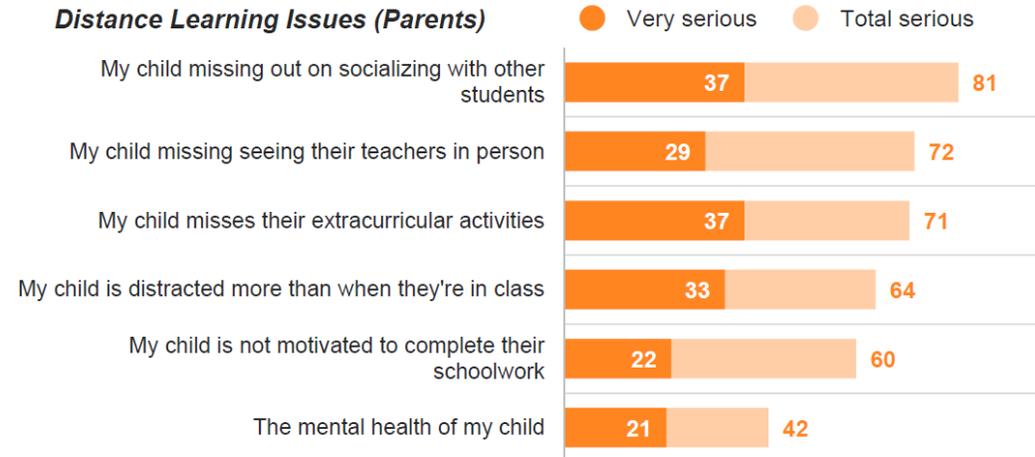
POLL FINDINGS

Distance learning issues by Parents and Educators

Distance Learning Issues (Educators)



Distance Learning Issues (Parents)



RE-OPENING SCHOOLS

- **Listen to experts:** Follow the scientific data and public health recommendations.
- **It will take more to do more:** Expanded programs, additional interventions, smaller class sizes, more bus routes, etc. require more resources.
- **Lead with equity:** Plans must explicitly address racial and economic disparities and impacts.



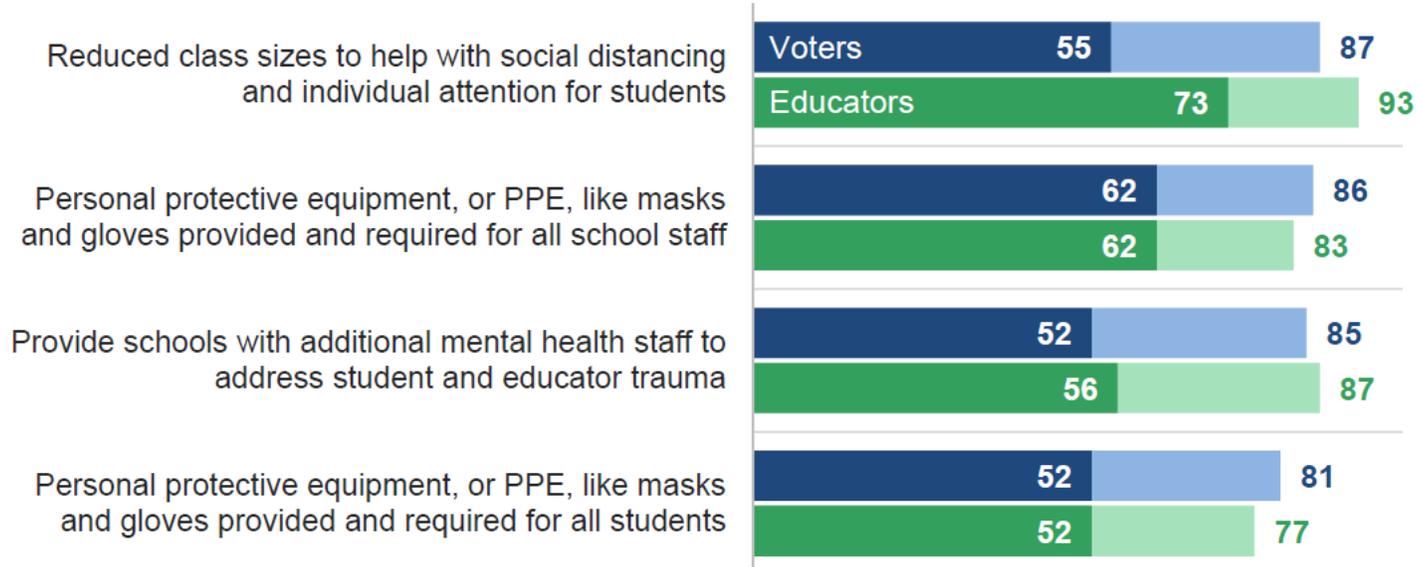
RE-OPENING SCHOOLS

- **Prepare for trauma:** Fear, illness, loss, and anxiety are just some of the trauma-related issues to address with both students and educators.
- **Well-rounded learning:** Plans must support learning for subjects and course work beyond elements linked to high-stakes standardized tests.
- **Recovery will take time:** Recovery plans must last beyond the 20-21 SY if we are going to successfully address the 7-10 month learning loss as a result of the pandemic.



Reopen Requirements

Strongly Support Total support



POLL FINDINGS

Re-open requirements by Voters and Educators



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RECOVERY, REOPENING, AND HYBRID LEARNING

EDUCATORS

“FIRST RESPONDER” MODE

BE FLEXIBLE

EXPANDED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

MORE COLLABORATION

PARENTS & STUDENTS

MAINTAIN ENGAGEMENT AND COMPLETE ASSIGNMENTS

FOLLOW SAFETY AND HYGIENCE PROTOCOLS

FACILITATE AND SUPPORT OUTREACH FROM EDUCATORS

LEAs & LOCAL GOVTs

GUARANTEE INTERNET ACCESS

1:1 DEVICES

STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

MEET FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

STATE BOARD

PROVIDE GUIDANCE AND REOPENING STANDARDS

ALLOCATE RESOURCES TO TARGET EQUITY AND TRAUMA

ANTICIPATE NECESSARY WAIVERS

LEGISLATORS & POLICY MAKERS

OVERRIDE THE VETO OF THE BLUEPRINT

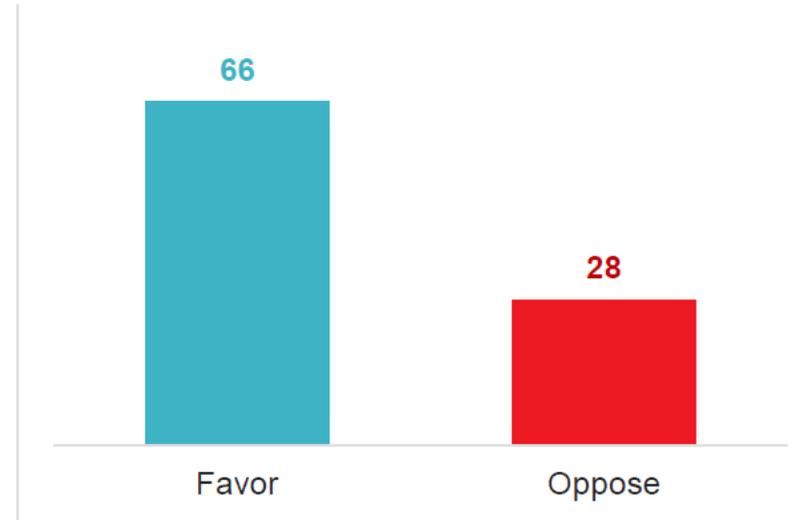
IDENTIFY AND FRONTLOAD ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

HOLD MSDE ACCOUNTABLE

POLL FINDINGS

Supporters say that we need these additional resources to increase teacher pay, hire more teachers, expand career and technical education programs, more equitably fund schools, and implement other research-based strategies to help students.

Opponents say the pandemic has sent the economy into a nose-dive and now is not the time to increase spending by billions of dollars.



**THANK
YOU**



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To: Interested Parties

From: GBAO

Date: May 29, 2020

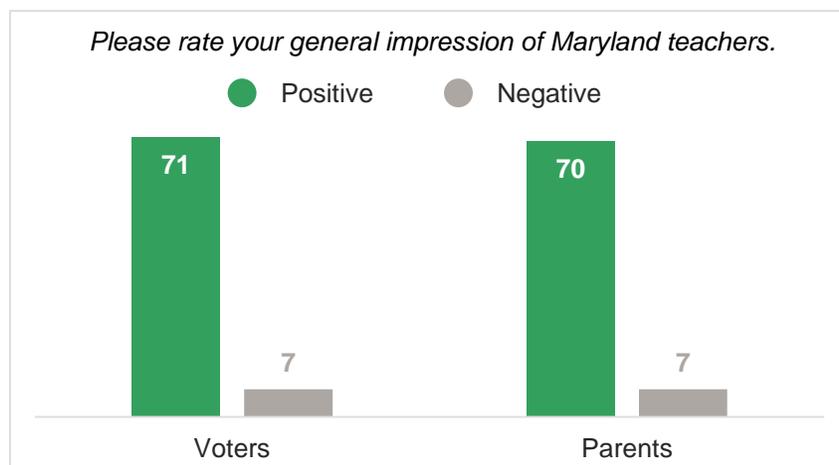
Poll Analysis: Maryland Voters And Educators On Distance Learning

Amidst the coronavirus pandemic and distance learning, our recent polling of Maryland voters¹ and educators² finds Maryland educators are well-regarded, and voters believe teachers are underpaid.

Distance learning poses many challenges for educators and families. Teachers are primarily concerned about student engagement, while parents are concerned about their children missing their school community and not having a well-rounded school experience. Increased safety measures – like requiring PPE and social distancing through reduced class size – are widely supported and seen as essential to reopening schools.

Key Survey Findings

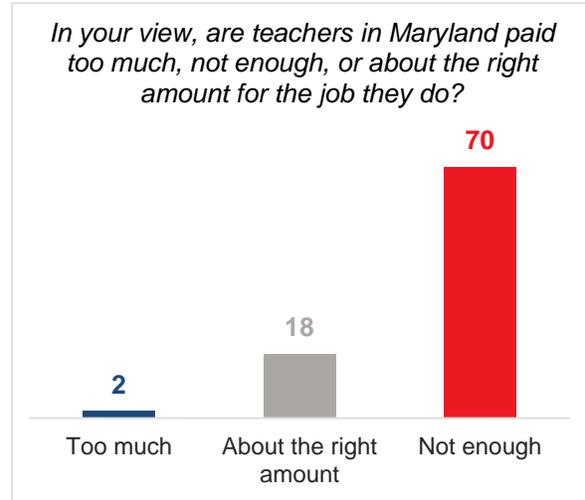
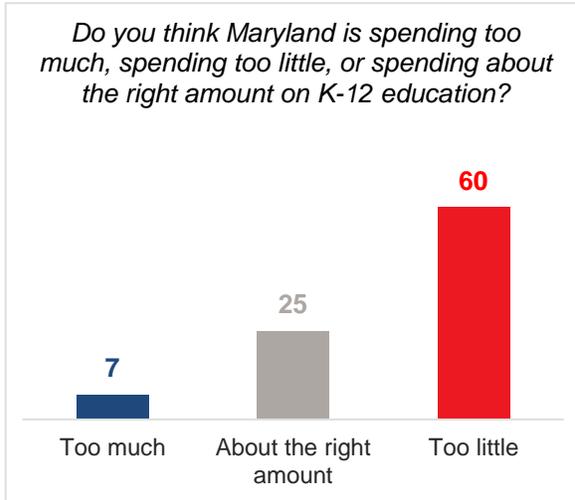
- Maryland teachers are held in high regard.** A strong majority of voters (71 percent) and parents (70 percent) have positive impressions of teachers in the state. Just 7 percent have a negative impression.



¹ GBAO conducted a survey of 650 registered voters statewide. Results include an oversample of parents for a total on 217 parents of kids under 18. This survey, on behalf of MSEA, was conducted May 14 – 19, 2020 and reached respondents on both landlines and cell phones. Results were weighted to a sample size of 500 to reflect the regional and demographic characteristics of the state and carry a margin of error of +/- 4.4 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence interval.

² GBAO conducted a survey of 800 MSEA members via landline and phones from May 14 – 18, 2020 and 2,526 MSEA members via Qualtrics from May 19 – 25, 2020. The survey results carry a margin of error +/- 3.7 and +/- 2.0 percentage points, respectively, at the 95 percent confidence interval.

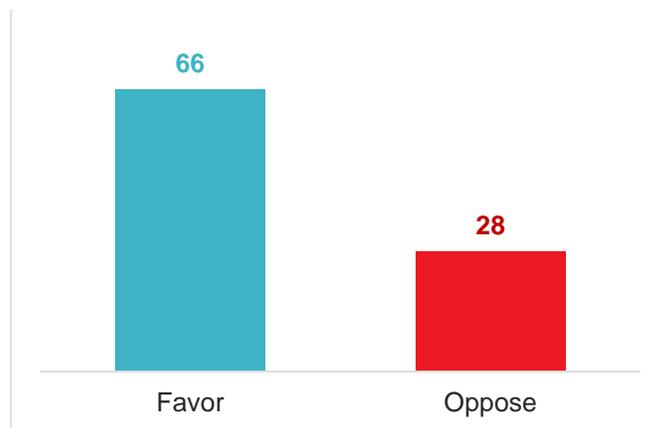
- **Current school funding and teacher pay are seen as inadequate.** A majority of voters believes Maryland is spending too little on K-12 education (60 percent) and teacher pay (70 percent).



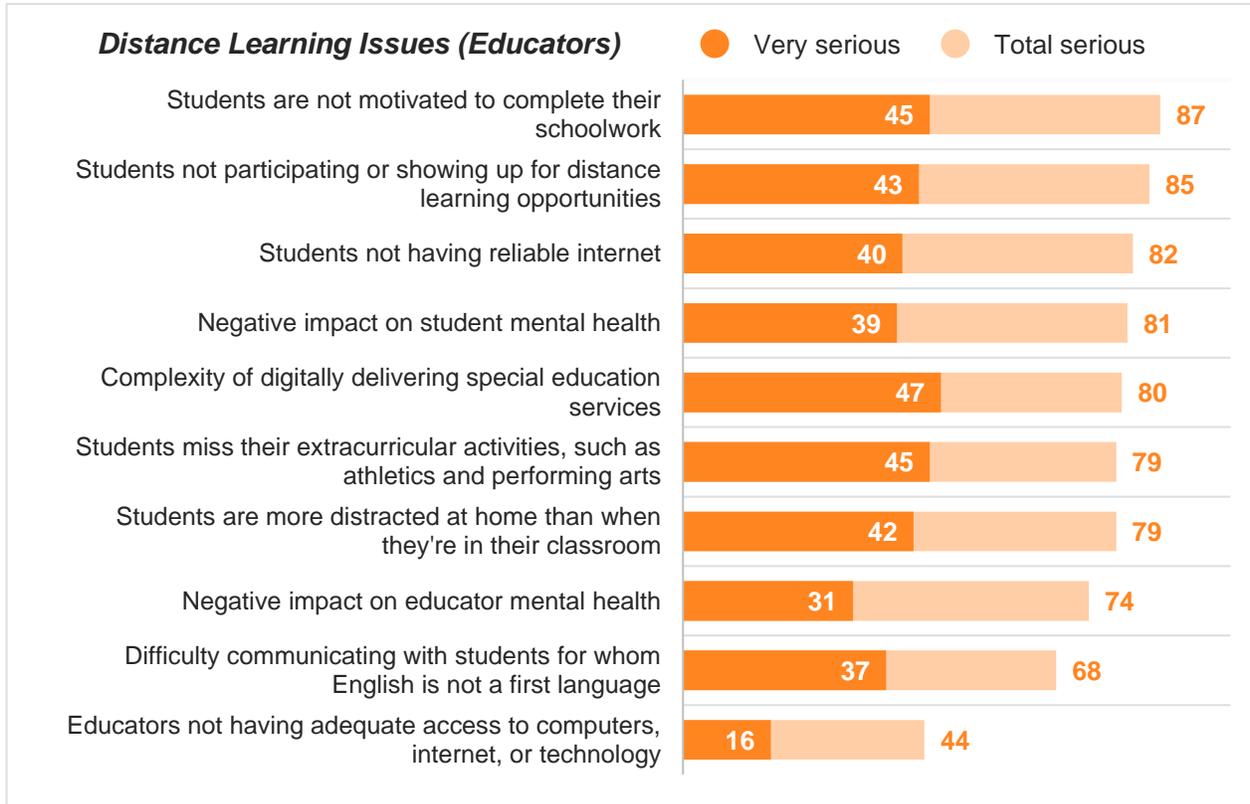
- **Majority supports the Blueprint plan after arguments from both sides by a margin of 2-to-1.** Pandemic-related economic attacks do little to dampen support. There is majority support holds across region and race. Republicans are equally divided on the plan after hearing the messaging (49 percent favor, 48 percent oppose).

Supporters say that we need these additional resources to increase teacher pay, hire more teachers, expand career and technical education programs, more equitably fund schools, and implement other research-based strategies to help students.

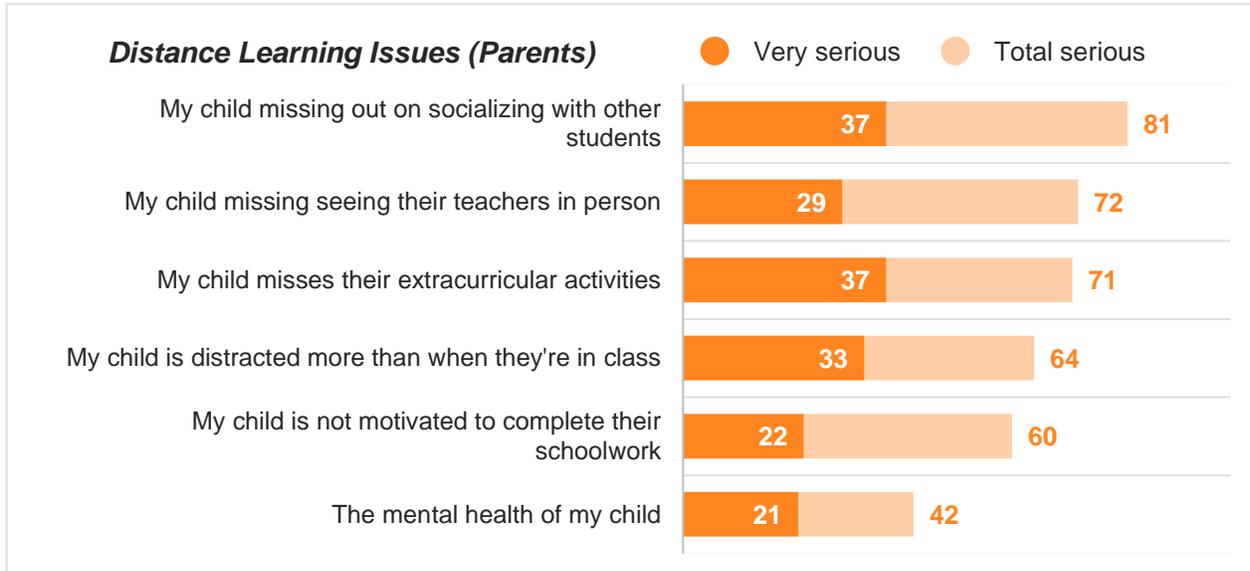
Opponents say the pandemic has sent the economy into a nose-dive and now is not the time to increase spending by billions of dollars.



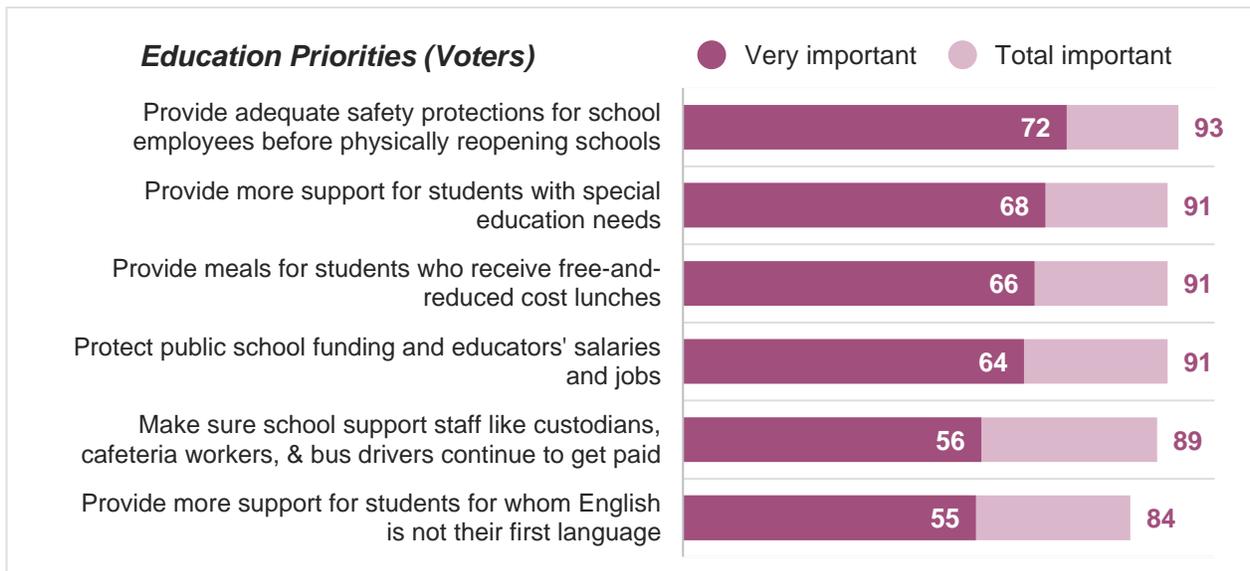
- Educators face many hurdles with distance learning.** Student participation is the biggest concern for Maryland educators. Student internet access, declining mental health, special education, lack of extracurriculars, and home distractions all pose serious challenges to virtual instruction.



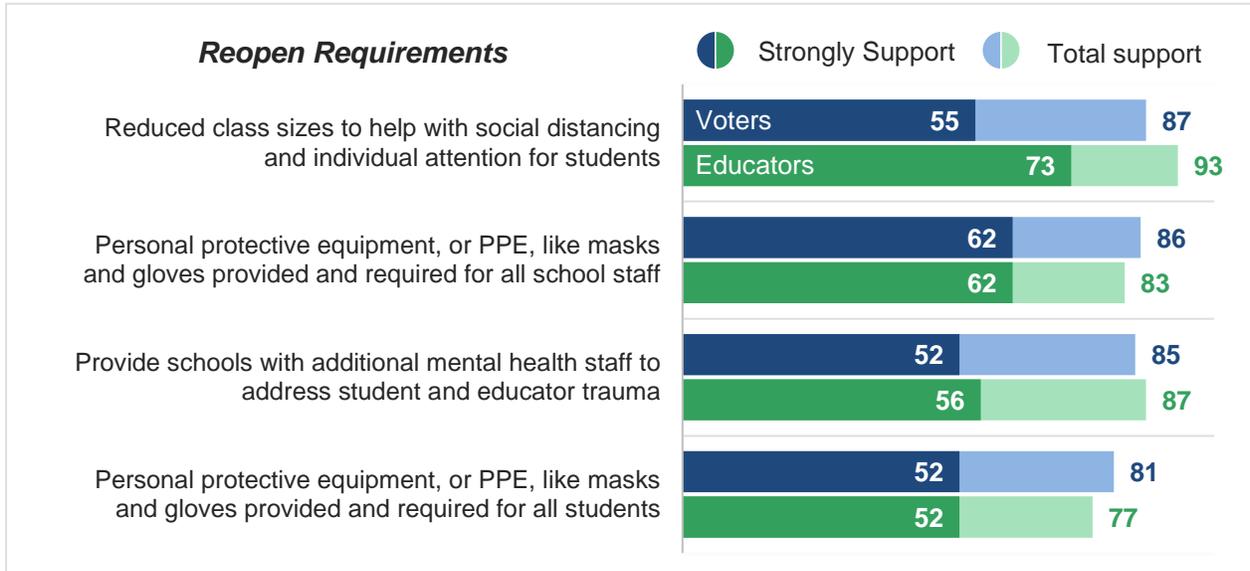
- Parents worry about their children’s diminished connection with their school communities and lack of well-rounded education.** Parents’ primary concerns about distance learning center on their children’s separation from their friends and teachers and inability to participate in extracurricular activities.



- Voters support a wide range of education measures in response to the coronavirus pandemic.** Safety equipment and protections for school employees receives the strongest support. Strong support also exists for special education, access to meals for children in need, and protecting school funding and educator pay.



- Voters would like safety measures to be implemented before reopening schools.**
 Voters and educators overwhelmingly support reducing classes sizes to help with social distancing, requiring protective equipment like masks and gloves, and adding mental health staff. Educators, in particular, place strong emphasize on reduced class sizes.





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June 11th, 2020

Good afternoon to Chairwoman Macintosh, Chair Kaiser and the members of the committees -

I'd like to begin by thanking you for holding this hearing and for inviting the Baltimore Teachers Union to provide information about the experiences of educators during the school closure due to Covid-19. I appreciate the critical role our state leadership has taken in striving to ensure that all Maryland's students have an education that is second to none. Those efforts are especially necessary in Baltimore City, where schools struggle to provide for the basic needs of our students. In our district, schools regularly lack items such as access to texts to accompany the curriculum, substitute teachers, full staffing for each school, regular access to working technology, and access to hand soap, hot water, paper towels, and drinkable running water. Together we can work towards a future where our children truly receive a world-class education. But we will never get there if we aren't honest about where we currently are.

I hope to spend the bulk of my time today sharing with you the words of one of our classroom educators, but before I do, I would like to briefly mention a few concerns from our 7,000 members. Our members are frontline workers, and include community school site specialists who are working in communities every day, under considerable pressure and stress to get families what they need. Our community school site specialists in particular are reporting a high degree of hazards, including physical threats to their safety. We need legislation that frontloads an investment in community schools, and provides more support to schools that are providing essential services, because the needs of our community have been amplified by the pandemic.

We are also concerned about ensuring that our members voices are heard as the school district and state prepare to reopen. The state's recovery plans for education have added equity as an afterthought, and have not considered the needs of the most vulnerable students. An important example of this is the state's guidance on school buses. Students in Baltimore City, one of the largest jurisdictions, don't use school buses to get to school - they use the MTA. Yet there was no consideration of the fact that in Baltimore City, our responsibility to mitigate the threats present as students are traveling between home and school look considerably different than in other jurisdictions. An approach centered in equity designs a process to make sure the needs of every student are planned for and met. The plans we've seen from MSDE don't even consider, or even seem to be aware of our students' needs.

We are also extremely circumscribed when it comes to participating in the school district's recovery planning process. The school district has asked for a single union appointed teacher or PSRP (Paraprofessional and School Related Personnel) to sit on 16 different workstream committees. The

elected leadership of the union, which is only 1 year removed from classroom teaching experience, and is in direct contact with our members through a variety of means, has been told we cannot attend any of the workstream committees ourselves, and we must meet with the district leadership separately to be briefed independently. The district doesn't want us in the room where information is communicated and decisions are made, but we maintain that our ability to bring in the experiences from over 100 different job classifications is essential if these plans are to be implemented effectively across a wide range of schools and classroom settings.

I'd like to share one such voice with you - from a teacher who wishes to remain anonymous due to the strong culture of retaliation and reprisal that exists in Baltimore City Schools.

Many educational activists and advocates have recently declared that we must not go "back to normal." Instead, they implore us to create a more just, fair, and equitable educational system than the one we left pre-Covid. This sentiment rings especially true for Baltimore City Public Schools. A school district rife in inequity and inequality. This can be evidenced by everything from our physical school buildings to our low academic performance. Rather than going back to these systems, we should work to create something that truly ensures all Maryland students receive an excellent education.

As a Baltimore City high school teacher, one of my most pressing concerns during this pandemic has been my students' lack of access to technology. While many school districts were able to create elaborate distance learning plans, my students were at a standstill due to a lack of technology and internet access. While some laptops were given out to lucky students who were able to make it to our school on the day of distribution, these students, so unfamiliar with laptops because they rarely get a chance to use them in school, still struggled to complete their work and navigate confusing educational platforms. I was only able to access a laptop for my students one time throughout the entire school year and generally, the only time students get access to a computer, is for testing. We assume that students are able to easily navigate online platforms and use web-based educational tools. But without explicitly teaching them the skills, many students struggled with basic tasks, like copying documents or saving assignments. For students who weren't fortunate enough to be given a laptop by our school, they've been forced to participate in video lessons and complete assignments, over their phone. Imagine trying to write an essay or take a test from your smartphone as many of our students were expected to do. Next year, I worry that our limited technology access in school will be even more narrow, as many of the school's laptops were given to students to help them with distance learning. When, how, if, and in what condition, these computers will be returned, is unknown.

Another pressing issue has been our curriculum guidance during the pandemic. In the midst of this crisis, students need support for their mental health and more resources towards social and emotional learning. When I brought up these issues, I was told to teach the curriculum as normal. With very little training and support from the district in regards to setting up online classes, teachers have struggled with how to transform difficult in person instruction to an online platform. Additionally, Seniors, already let down with missing proms and graduation ceremonies, were given large packets to complete as their graduation requirement. The packet for literature was over 70 pages and focused on difficult topics and themes that

would require a lot of time in class to master. This packet was nearly impossible to do virtually and students were expected to read an entire text from their device (usually a cell phone).

This packet was another example of the district's preoccupation with giving an illusion of rigorous instruction rather than ensuring students have a genuine opportunity to learn. It seemed like these packets were given as a way to say "we gave all students challenging work" with no regard for how and if students could actually complete the assignments. This happens often in the district. Our curriculum seems more for show than for realistically educating students. Many of our students are far below grade level in reading and math. Rather than prioritizing the remedial work and support they need, the district continues to bury its head in the sand and act as if our students don't require the additional support and differentiated instruction needed to truly move them to grade level.

The teacher whose words I've just read has a deep love for her students, and he works diligently to engage with them and connect with them in ways that honor their humanity and develop their passions.

Knowing what we know about the way schools operated before, we all have an obligation not to rebuild the same structures that existed before COVID-19. If the scope of plans is truly limitless, as is proclaimed in the letter that convened today's meeting, let's create better, more imaginative structures and let's finally resource schools appropriately and adequately.

Thank you for your time and your attention to this matter.

Cristina Duncan Evans,
Teacher Chapter Chair