



Baltimore, Maryland 21239

**SENATE BILL 1000 & HOUSE BILL 1300:
BLUEPRINT FOR MARYLAND'S FUTURE – IMPLEMENTATION**

**Senate Budget and Tax, Education and Health and Environmental Affairs Committees
House Appropriations and Ways and Means Committees**

FEBRUARY 17, 2020

POSTION: SUPPORT

The Northeast Community Organization (NECO), an umbrella organization representing eighteen communities in the north and northeast areas of Baltimore City, has been active in the community since 1970. We are committed to working with state and local government to strengthen our communities. We **strongly support Senate Bill 1000/House Bill 1300**, which provides an opportunity to add career and technical education to schools, give teachers the pay they deserve, expand access to pre-kindergarten, and provide schools the resources they need to educate our children. We also **support fully funding** the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

Improving our schools in Baltimore City has been a primary objective of NECO and we view this bill as an opportunity to advance that goal. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future (SB1000/HB1300) is particularly important for the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) because it allocates resources more equitably to students who need them most. The Concentration of Poverty School Grant will allow the district to expand Community Schools into more schools and the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program will enhance and expand the district's prekindergarten program. The proposed allocations for Career and Technical Education are desperately needed to improve options and opportunities for students wanting to pursue a career track. The provisions providing additional resources for mental health workers, support for trauma informed care and restorative approaches will change the trajectory for struggling learners across the state. Increasing the minimum teacher salary is an important step towards paying teachers as the professionals they are, but we think this should be in place at least by July 1, 2025 rather than delaying it until 2029.

NECO Purpose

To unite the neighborhood associations, community organizations, and institutions within the designated area; *To articulate* the needs and concerns of the NECO area regarding community development and economic, commercial, educational, recreational and environmental issues to the City and State governments;

To provide a forum to educate NECO members and the means for public discourse and education; and

To support, assist and serve as a resource to member organizations.

While we strongly support SB1000/HB1300, we believe it can be strengthened in the following ways. First, we are concerned that the two districts serving large shares of diverse and low-income students—Baltimore City and Prince George’s County—have the largest increase in the local share of the funding formula. We recommend revisions to the local share of the funding formula and finding mechanisms to help low-wealth districts meet their local share obligations.

Second, we support strong accountability, but we oppose withholding desperately needed resources from schools and districts as a sanction for not meeting performance goals. This provision will negatively affect districts such as Baltimore City that serve the most disadvantaged students and have the greatest challenges. It is also unclear how withholding resources will help districts and schools improve.

Third, using a cut score on standardized assessments to assess students in the 10th grade for “college and career readiness” may seem like a good idea, but it is likely to result in the inequitable treatment of students, including those in Baltimore City. We do not have any clear understanding of the skills, prerequisites, or knowledge that are needed to succeed in college, and this is even more true for what it means to be “career ready.”¹ These provisions will most likely identify “diverse” students as not meeting the college and career ready standard, and will narrow the curriculum options available to them by requiring remedial or transition coursework and prohibiting enrollment in post college and career ready pathways. Finally, a test score cut-off point is an arbitrary measure of what a student knows and can do. Ultimate success in high school is more likely to be enhanced by providing timely interventions in earlier grades for students at risk of academic failure.

Finally, to fund Senate Bill 1000 and House Bill 1300, we support progressive changes to our tax structure. This is very doable as there are ways to make the tax code more equitable and progressive without burdening taxpayers.²

We urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 1000 and House Bill 1300.

Respectively submitted,

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Northeast Community Organization (NECO)
Baltimore, MD

¹ Fey, J. T. (2014). *High school mathematics standards in Maryland: Challenges and consequences of policy implementation*. College Park, MD: Maryland Equity Project, The University of Maryland. Retrieved from https://education.umd.edu/sites/education.umd.edu/files/Fey_Math%20Policy%20Commentary_6%2024%2014_0.pdf

² Meyer, C., (January 2019). *Building our future: A revenue plan for world-class schools in Maryland*. Baltimore: Maryland Center on Economic Policy. Retrieved from <http://www.mdeconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Building-Our-Future.pdf>

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