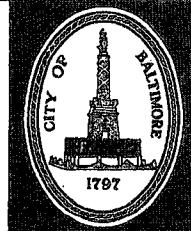


COMPTROLLER

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**OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER**

Department of Audits
Department of Real Estate
Municipal Post Office
Municipal Telephone Exchange
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February 17, 2020

The Honorable Guy Guzzone, Chairman
Budget & Taxation Committee
Senate of Maryland
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis MD 21401

The Honorable Maggie L. McIntosh, Chair
Appropriations Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
House Office Building, Room 121
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis MD 21401

Dear Chairman Guzzone and Chairwoman McIntosh:

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1000, "Blueprint for Maryland's Future--Implementation," which will be heard by the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee and the House Appropriations Committee in a joint session with the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee on Monday February 17, 2020. Senate Bill 1000 would implement the recommendations of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education, also known as the Kirwan Commission. This legislation will begin the process of improving Maryland's public school system by increasing funding for educational programs and teacher salaries, establishing robust professional development pathways for educators, and providing wraparound services beyond the classroom to ensure student success. It would also establish a framework and process for ensuring that local school systems are accountable for results and direct additional resources to school systems with high concentrations of poverty.

For 24 years I have served as Baltimore City Comptroller, and have owned a small business in Baltimore for most of my adult life. I frequently speak to groups of students, young adults, and parents about topics such as financial literacy and career preparation. I have been fortunate to mentor many professionals in the public and private sectors. A recurring theme in my interactions with City residents is the importance of education in closing the opportunity gap and lifting people out of poverty. The Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) has performed remarkably well given its budgetary constraints. However, full implementation of the Kirwan Commission's recommendations, as proposed in Senate Bill 1000, will allow City schools to rise to a higher level of excellence and attract the best and brightest to educate our children.

The provisions of Senate Bill 1000 will be especially beneficial for students in Baltimore City in a wide variety of ways. The expansion of full-day pre-kindergarten at no cost or reduced cost for low-income families will allow children to begin learning as soon as possible, while giving their parents more time to pursue their careers and contribute to the local economy. The Teacher Quality and Diversity Program established in the bill would increase teacher salaries and put in place rigorous, clearly-defined professional development pathways, thereby elevating the status of the teaching profession and giving the best teachers incentives to remain in the classroom.

One of the most important components of Senate Bill 1000 for Baltimore City is implementation of college and career readiness for all students by the end of the tenth grade, and the establishment of robust statewide Career and Technology Education (CTE) programs. In our local economy high-growth, high-wage industries such as health care, information technology, logistics and construction are experiencing employee shortages as the current workforce nears retirement age. Many of the skilled trades in those industries require an industry-recognized certificate or an associate's degree which can be earned through CTE programs at high schools and community colleges. CTE programs connect students to sustainable, fulfilling careers without the time and expense required for a four-year degree. By establishing a Career and Technical Education Committee and incentivizing the



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The Hon. Guy Guzzone

The Hon. Maggie McIntosh

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2/14/2020

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development of CTE programs in collaboration with the business community, Senate Bill 1000 makes a powerful and lasting commitment to developing this important but often overlooked segment of Maryland's public education system.

Senate Bill 1000 also addresses inequities in the current system by targeting resources to communities with high concentrations of poverty and providing wraparound social services. These provisions of the bill are vitally important in Baltimore, where some schools are located in areas with significant income and health disparities compared to the rest of the state. The Concentration of Poverty grant program established in the bill is an important first step in meeting the needs of historically under-invested communities. Finally, the creation and empowerment of the Accountability and Implementation Board in Senate Bill 1000 will ensure that school systems across the state improve their programs uniformly and in a collaborative way.

The Kirwan Commission recommendations are a once-in-a-generation opportunity to elevate Maryland's public schools to the level of the best education systems in the world. Well-educated students become productive participants in the economy and engaged members of their communities. It is not an exaggeration to say that the future stability and growth of Baltimore City and the surrounding region depend on future generations of young people who are equipped to succeed in the twenty-first century workplace and to confront the challenges of everyday life intentionally and courageously. Senate Bill 1000 will give our public schools the tools and resources they need to accomplish their vitally important mission of preparing our children for success in all aspects of life.

For all these reasons, I urge the four committees that are considering Senate Bill 1000 to give it a favorable report. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter in greater detail, please contact me at 410-396-4755.

Sincerely,



Joan M. Pratt, CPA
Comptroller

cc: The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser, Chairwoman, House Ways & Means Committee
The Honorable Paul Pinsky, Chairman, Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee
The Honorable Nancy King
The Honorable Bill Ferguson
The Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller
The Honorable Ronald Young