



**Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.**  
State Superintendent of Schools

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**BILL:** Senate Bill 275 **DATE:** February 4, 2020

**SUBJECT:** Education - Community and Local Accountability for Struggling Schools (CLASS) Act of 2020 - Innovation Schools **COMMITTEE:** Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**POSITION:** **SUPPORT**

**CONTACT:** Tiffany Johnson Clark  
410-260-6028 (Annapolis)  
[tiffany.clark1@maryland.gov](mailto:tiffany.clark1@maryland.gov)

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) supports Senate Bill (SB) 275, Education - Community and Local Accountability for Struggling Schools (CLASS) Act of 2020 - Innovation Schools. This bill provides greater accountability for school improvement and establishes a clear direction to improve the performance of one-star schools as identified within the Maryland Report Card.

The CLASS Act bolsters a number of the supports currently being provided by the Department for comprehensive and targeted school improvement, while offering flexibility to a local community to establish an Innovation School with input from all key stakeholders that are a part of the community. This includes an Innovation Plan Committee consisting of the local superintendent, a member of the county board, principal and teacher representation, and a parent of a student enrolled in the identified school.

Autonomy in key areas, as identified by each school’s Innovation Plan Committee, sets a course forward for schools with struggling performance metrics to target specific areas that may not be working effectively within the school. This could include a complete review of curriculum, school calendars and schedules, as well as staffing and budgets. Other metrics for student performance will also be considered, in addition to those already encompassed in the Maryland Report Card.

While there are a number of factors that affect school quality and student outcomes that could be addressed by an established Innovation Plan Committee, it is crucial to have layers of accountability and transparency. SB 275 requires an Innovation School to submit reports on school improvement progress to the local board and State Board of Education every three months. This measure of accountability will ensure that an Innovation School is consistently making progress. It will also provide the opportunity for a school to adjust an innovation plan if implemented interventions are not improving student outcomes.

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Innovation Schools  
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School communities are fully involved in the process of establishing an Innovation School and parents and guardians must be notified of any proposed changes that would be implemented at an identified school. Additionally, the school community must be given the opportunity to provide public comment on any proposed Innovation Plan.

SB 275 takes extraordinary steps forward in providing necessary supports for enhancing school performance and improvement across the State of Maryland to ensure that all of our students have access to, and receive, a high-quality education. Alongside the Department's continued and steadfast efforts to improve our schools that are experiencing the greatest challenges, this bill provides necessary flexibility, accountability, and transparency to address major issues within a school through a holistic and collaborative approach.

We respectfully request that the Committee provide a Favorable report on **SB 275**. For further information, please contact Tiffany Clark, at 410-260-6028, or [tiffany.clark1@maryland.gov](mailto:tiffany.clark1@maryland.gov).