



CAROLINE COUNTY
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CAROLINE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OFFICE

**House Bill 1300 / Senate Bill 1000
Blueprint for Maryland's Future – Implementation**

February 17, 2020

Letter of Information from Caroline County Public Schools & Caroline County Commissioners

The County Commissioners of Caroline County and Caroline County Public Schools are writing jointly to provide the committees with information regarding impact of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future on Caroline County.

The goals established by the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education and codified in these bills represent a historic opportunity to improve the way instruction is delivered, our ability to attract, develop, and retain high quality teachers, and to ensure our students receive the support services necessary to help them thrive. The County Commissioners and the Caroline County Board of Education support the aims of this legislation and are committed working together to ensure we deliver on its goals.

However, we continue to be concerned about the level of local of funding the bill requires of the state's poorest jurisdictions. The Commissioners recognize the State will ask Caroline County to do more to invest in education. However, our low wealth limits our ability to raise the revenue that will be necessary to meet our local share without creating unintended consequences for our economy and the host of other important governmental services on which our students and their families rely.

Caroline County has the lowest per pupil wealth in the state. The Commissioners have already raised our income tax rate to the maximum and did that specifically to pay for school construction. As a result, we have nowhere to turn but property taxes. However, it would be very difficult to fund our local share only on property taxes. A cent on the property tax in Caroline County brings in only \$258,000. This is the second lowest amount in the state and far behind even our neighboring counties, such as Queen Anne's County where a penny on the property tax generates more than three times the revenue.

It is this inequity in wealth and the ability to raise revenue that has prevented counties like Caroline, Prince George's, and Baltimore City from being able to invest in our schools the way our wealthier sister counties have. This gap between wealthy and poor counties is precisely the reason why Maryland receives poor marks on equity. In states that are performing well on equity measures, the State government is the senior partner in education funding. We fear that unless the State takes on a larger share of funding for the poorest school systems, the opportunity that this legislation represents to address generational poverty will be missed. Improving equity must remain at the center of the legislature's consideration of this bill, and we do not believe that will be achieved by asking so much from those who can afford to pay the least.

We believe deeply in the power of public education to change the trajectory of not just individual lives, but whole communities. We are excited about the opportunity this legislation represents. However, we ask the committees to increase the State funding participation for the poorest counties.