



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

February 17, 2020

Letter of Information

World Class Schools – A State Priority, Should Rely on State Funding

The Rural Counties Coalition, a chapter organization of the Maryland Association of Counties wishes to emphasize our support for the Letter of Information provided by MACo.

The State of Maryland should live up to its constitutional obligation, stand behind its own ambitious recommendations, and provide State resources to implement the full costs of the Kirwan Blueprint plan.

The goals of the Kirwan Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education are ambitious and laudable and chart an important course forward for Maryland's commitment to its public school students. Counties, too, want world class schools and educational opportunities for all Maryland's schoolchildren. 2020 legislation to support and fund those recommendations will require a herculean fiscal effort.

The Maryland Constitution's requirement of "thorough and efficient" public schools properly places this duty onto the State – the most prominent such obligation on State policymakers. The far-reaching Kirwan plan is a continuation of this State requirement.

Reliance on local funds for half, or more, of education funding merely promotes and extends the resource gaps that still plague Maryland's schools – even decades after the Thornton Commission and subsequent legislation. In the Kirwan Commission's own research into "Fair Funding," the highest scoring state for equitable funding commits a much higher share of State funding than Maryland to achieve those goals.

The proposal from the Kirwan Commission propose a split of these new costs, with expected annual county costs escalating by more than \$1.2 billion – that is layered on top of current trends that already reflect multiple jurisdictions increasing taxes to support education. In nominal terms, the counties are compelled to increase an additional \$1.3 billion under the MOE law, for a total increase from \$6.5 billion to nearly \$9 billion by the final phase-in year. This continued reliance on local funds – fraught with dramatic and troubling differences in local ability to raise revenues – frustrates the Commission own goals of promoting equity and uniform opportunity.

Taking into account current county funding commitments that have exceeded state standards, a generational plan that further increases reliance on mandated county-level funding can never accomplish the most desirable and equitable outcomes.

Centralize this new school funding, to bring world class schools statewide, fairly.

MARYLAND RURAL COUNTIES COALITION

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