



HB1300/SB1000 BLUEPRINT FOR MARYLAND'S FUTURE - IMPLEMENTATION

February 17, 2020

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) supports **HB1300/SB1000 Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Implementation** with amendments. This legislation implements the recommendations of The Blueprint for Maryland's Future that are intended to transform Maryland's early childhood, primary, and secondary education system to the levels of high-performing systems around the world. The bill focuses on the following five policy areas as identified in the preliminary report of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (Kirwan Commission):

- Early childhood education;
- High-quality and diverse teachers and leaders;
- College and career readiness pathways, including career and technical education;
- More resources to ensure all students are successful; and
- Governance and accountability.

Strong State and county funding support of Pre-K–12 public education will ensure that all students have the programs, services, and instructional support needed to meet rigorous standards established for student performance. AACPS supports the charge of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education to review and address education funding issues in Maryland, particularly the enormous statewide education funding gap, which lags by nearly \$3 billion in State funding and nearly \$1 billion in local government investments.

AACPS believes that Maryland should move forward by adopting meaningful changes to the current school funding formulas, which now dates back to 2002. Accordingly, we support comprehensive changes to enhance our school funding formulas by increasing the base amount of funding for all students, sustaining and increasing the additional weighted per-pupil funding for our English Language Learners and students living in poverty, and significantly increasing the weighted funding amount for students receiving special education services. AACPS also supports adopting per pupil funding allocations for current and expanded Pre-K programs. As such, we greatly appreciate the work of the Kirwan Commission to tackle these difficult but important education issues.

The additional State funding investment proposed in the legislation relates to several key priority areas for AACPS, including grants, Pre-K funding, increases in teacher salaries, mental health services, special education, and supplemental instruction for struggling learners. Focusing on these particular areas will help AACPS fulfill its goal to elevate all students and eliminate all gaps. AACPS supports:

- High quality early education programs;
- Teacher preparation programs becoming more rigorous, and induction programs being more systematically integrated with teacher preparation;
- Increased State and local funding investments to expanding student access to college and career ready pathways; and
- Recommendations to provide a system that ensures all students are successful, regardless of income, language acquisition skills, or accommodations related to special education or physical disability.

While we strongly support the work of the Commission and the priorities identified in the proposed legislation, AACPS respectfully requests that HB1300/SB1000 be amended and clarified to address a few initial areas of concern.

First, tracking various revenue sources at the individual school level (75%-100% depending on the revenue source) will require a budgeting and financial reporting process and comprehensive computerized fiscal system restructuring for most districts in Maryland. Currently, unrestricted State Bridge to Excellence revenue and unrestricted County revenue is not required to be tracked down to the individual school or per pupil level. AACPS would need to add the following in order to meet these financial requirements as well as the new requirement to create and routinely update the Blueprint's specified Implementation Plan.

- A Budget Analyst FTE at \$113,600 (for budget allocation disbursement and tracking in the Budget Department);
- An Accountant FTE at \$113,600 (for mandated expenditure reporting/tracking in the Accounting Department);
- A Data Analyst FTE at \$102,000 (to statistically map resources down to the student/school level in the Instructional Data Department);
- A Program Manager FTE at \$118,900 (develops and continuously updates the Blueprint's Implementation Plan and all other reporting requirements); and
- \$100,000 in contracted consulting services required for modifications and upgrades to the budgeting and financial reporting systems to ensure accurate revenue allocations to each school and to track actual expenditures at the school and per pupil level.

Second, we recommend that the fiscal years on page 10 in lines 17 and 20 be amended to fiscal year 2024. Because the budgeting reporting requirement begin in fiscal year 2023, amending the language would allow school systems to report beginning with actual fiscal year 2023 expenditures as opposed to fiscal year 2022 expenditures as currently drafted. We also question whether the per pupil expenditure report submitted through the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) meets the requirement established in this section requirement. If it does not, AACPS requests that the committees consider allowing the ESSA per pupil expenditure report to be submitted by school systems to fulfill this reporting requirement.

Third, AACPS has concerns that the bill does not include funding for school system management of private Pre-K providers. Managing and coordinating increased Pre-K opportunities by private providers will result in more work and resources expended by local school systems. Accordingly, we request that the legislation provide funding for the increased costs related to administer the Pre-K program to include monitoring of private providers and setting up structures and processes to collect the "family share" of Tier II/III 4-year old students.

Fourth, we recommend that the CTE Committee be removed from the legislation.

Fifth, we request that the definition of “teacher” be revised to include all certificated employees. The current definition excludes employees at AACPS who are currently represented by the same bargaining unit as teachers. As drafted, the bill specifically excludes certain positions from the definition of “teacher,” including social workers, psychologists, and curriculum specialists.

Sixth, AACPS has concerns with various implementation dates that simply do not allow school systems enough time to take the necessary steps to begin implementing the requirements set forth in the bill. For example, the legislation requires local school systems to contract with private providers to account for at least 30% of the eligible Pre-K providers for the 2020-2021 school year. This is insufficient time to identify, contract with, establish and enroll students with private placements. Similarly, Section 7 of the legislation requires local school systems to develop a behavioral health plan by November 1 of this year. This is insufficient time to adequately review and develop a comprehensive plan. Another example is the requirement that the Accountability and Implementation Board to develop a Comprehensive Implementation Plan no later than December 15, 2020. Again, this is insufficient time for such an enormous undertaking. We believe that the Board needs adequate time to ensure that the Comprehensive Implementation Plan is viable. As such, we request that an additional review of the implementation dates occur to ensure that school systems and the various entities in the legislation have the time necessary to effectively implement the requirements set forth in the bill.

Finally, we have general concerns about the numerous accountability bodies created in the legislation. There is currently significant education oversight in place and it is unclear, as drafted in the legislation, how the newly created oversight bodies align with current oversight bodies in the State.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** committee report with the proposed amendments on HB1300/SB1000.