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February 17, 2020

Maryland Senate

Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee
Budget and Taxation Committee

Maryland House of Delegates

Appropriations Committee
Ways and Means Committee

Re: SB 1000/HB 1300: Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Implementation

Position: Support with Amendments

Arts Education in Maryland Schools (AEMS) wants to thank all of the members of the Kirwan Commission and those who helped with the development of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future's Implementation Plan. We also want to thank the hundreds of advocates state-wide who work collectively to ensure that Maryland's 900,000 public school students receive the high quality education that they truly deserve.

At AEMS, we envision a public education system in Maryland that supports, cultivates, nurtures, and uplifts students' creativity regardless of their background so that they can thrive. We view education holistically and know that our focus areas will help us support the systemic change of achieving a truly holistic education for our students. We view the arts as a tool for educational equity by addressing systemic issues and, by investigating the inequities happening within arts education. We know that education, including **arts education**, is a civil right and believe that all students in the state should receive their instruction to the highest of quality.

AEMS has a history of working closely with the state government and elected officials to support policies that enable all students equitable access to high quality arts instruction that meets the state fine arts standards. In 2014, AEMS led The Governor's P-20 Leadership Council Task Force on Arts Education in Maryland Schools - a group of leaders from around the state that did an extensive literature review around policies for arts education to inform best practices that should be implemented throughout the state. The final report of the task force included state level recommendations, strategies, and rationales to ensure that all students have access to a high quality arts education. AEMS has worked with MSDE, school systems, and institutions of higher education to develop and support best

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practices, teacher training, and professional development to ensure that there is capacity for defining and providing high quality programs.

AEMS supports SB1000/HB1300 - Blueprint for Maryland's Future with recommended amendments. We highly urge the General Assembly to review them to ensure that all students have access to high quality educational resources, instructional rigor, and student services throughout their academic career. We also ask that there are no under-funded or unfunded mandates within the foundation formula defined in current laws such as the **arts**. In the current legislation, there is no attempt to remedy the lack of adequate funding for arts education, even though **arts education is considered a core subject**. We also ask for opportunities to support students from communities that may need additional support such as low socio-economic communities, immigrant communities, special needs communities, and communities that have been under-served due to the historical redlining which include communities of color.

AEMS also urges the General Assembly to ensure that there is oversight of the policy on a state-wide and local level to avoid lack of implementation, funding, and accountability. We believe that this process should be a collaborative process with our school communities, educators, and school leaders at the forefront to lead strategy and support for implementation.

In conclusion, AEMS strongly supports SB1000/HB1300 and urges the General Assembly to submit a favorable report with amendments. We believe that Maryland is going in the right direction to ensure that our students become well-rounded creative citizens that will contribute to the future of not only the state or country, but internationally. Thank you again for your work and please remember: **our kids can't wait.**

Thank You,

Quanice G. Floyd
Executive Director
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NOTE: See attached for recommended amendments and comments.

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AEMS stands in alignment with our colleagues at the Maryland Education Coalition with the following clarifications and amendments to SB 1000/ HB 1300. We urge the General Assembly to consider the following:

- **Subtitle 2, page 10- Aid to Education** - AEMS is concerned that there may not be adequate funding to address mandates in COMAR, State, ESSA Plan & other state or federal laws (Title I programs, Instruction Programs, Core Subject - **including the arts**, etc.).
- **Subtitle 4, page 59, Accountability and Implementation Board** - AEMS does not object to the board, but we are concerned their membership may not adequately ensure meaningful stakeholder consultation in the decision-making process as defined in federal law and elsewhere. We are concerned the makeup may not be independent or objective. There also does not appear to be a requirement that a member has a “high level” of experience or expertise with each of the major student groups (Special Ed, ELL, Lower-income, Gifted & Talented), a requirement to be competent culturally, economically and geographically nor in differences in ability or need, especially for students of color.
- **Section 5-405, page 66- Withholding of Funds to LEAs** - AEMS objects to the holding of any government funds for public education, especially if there is evidence of unfunded or under-funded mandates and only after MSDE and the LSS have worked collaboratively to address concerns, agreed by consensus on a plan to address them with a realistic timeline and resources that will promote progress or success. This has been attempted several times in the past, directly harming student & staff resources or services and the school system, school or program level.
- **5-406, pages 69, School level expenditure reporting** - Does not appear to clearly require local school improvement teams with transparency and stakeholder consultation in the decision-making process.
- **5-407, page 69, Withholding of Funds from Departments** - AEMS objects to the holding of any government funds for public education, especially if there is evidence of unfunded or under-funded mandates and only after MSDE and the LSS have worked collaboratively to address concerns, agree by consensus on a plan to address them with a realistic timeline and resources that will promote progress or success. Simply put, it is more harmful and less effective.
- **5-409, page 72, Other Board Duties and Reporting** - Does not appear to require meaningful stakeholder consultation in the decision-making process and transparency.



- **Section 6-121, page 86, Elements of Teacher Prep Program and Role for MSDE** - Does not appear to clearly require educators or administrators to have quality preparation to understand, identify, or provide services for Special Needs, ELL or Gifted & Talented/High Ability students nor students of color or of different cultures.
- **6-1001, page 95, Definitions** - Add to (2) **“TEACHER” DOES NOT INCLUDE, UNLESS OTHERWISE PROVIDED:**
 - **Clarification of what is defined as a curriculum specialist**
 - **Add (IX) Guidance Counselor (currently well understaffed within most school systems at 250:1 ratio)**
- **7-103, page 119, Remove Half-day Programs from Grant Eligibility** - This is supported providing school districts have funding to meet increased enrollment in age appropriate facilities (Number/height of bathrooms, sinks, etc.).
- **8-201, page 142, Gifted and Talented Pathway** - *(2) EACH LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM SHALL DEVELOP ACCELERATED PATHWAYS AND ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS TO ACHIEVE COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS BY 3RD GRADE AND BEFORE THE END OF THE 10TH GRADE.*
 - Add Language consistent with COMAR REGULATION 13A.04.07 Gifted and Talented Education