



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE, HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE, SENATE EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE AND SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

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

POSITION: Support

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The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) strongly supports HB 1300/SB 1000 Blueprint for Maryland's Future – Implementation.

This proposed legislation addresses the changing demographic composition of our public school students by including an additional per pupil weight for the concentration of poverty and increasing funding for English learners, students with special needs, and other targeted populations. We desperately need the services that can be leveraged by the Community Schools Coordinators funded by the concentrated poverty weight. The recommendations also recognize the research-based importance of early education by including a weight for full-day Pre-K for low-income 3- and 4-year old children. Other commendable provisions include additional resources for teachers, mental health workers and other services to reduce the negative influence of social problems on children's ability to learn. The proposed allocations for Career and Technical Education are desperately needed to improve options and opportunities for students wanting to pursue a career track.

LWVMD has supported a foundation program based on a weighted per pupil formula supported from general state revenues at a level high enough to eliminate inequities since 1972. Maryland League members have, since the 1950s, understood the importance of the relationship between various revenue sources available to state government and the services provided by those revenues. To fund the Commission's recommendations, we support progressive changes to our tax structure. Finally, we support policies that prioritize collaboration across governmental departments and agencies and provide easy-to-access services for children and their families, something the Community Schools provisions address.

In addition since 1989, LWVMD has supported state aiding local school systems in attracting and retaining competent teachers including setting realistic minimum beginning salaries. Increasing the minimum teacher salary is an important step towards paying teachers as the professionals they are, but we think this should be in place at least by July 1, 2025 rather than delaying it until 2029.

For government in general, we support a systematic review process of expenditures, programs and services to determine their impact, efficiency and sustainability. Thus, we support strong accountability, but we oppose withholding desperately needed resources from schools and districts as a sanction for not meeting performance goals. We would want schools which are struggling to achieve strong implementation and achievement to get more help from the accountability board and have significant stakeholder input into plans.

Providing adequate and equitable Pre-K - 12 public education by supporting full funding for the Commission recommendations is one of our highest priorities for the 2020 General Assembly. LWVMD with 1500+ members urges a favorable report for HB 1300/SB 1000 because the cost of not investing in adequate and equitable funding for public education is too great.