



BILL: Senate Bill 1000 and House Bill 1300
TITLE: Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Implementation
HEARING DATE: February 17, 2020
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
COMMITTEES: Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
House Appropriations Committee and Ways and Means Committee
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The Washington County Board of Education supports Senate Bill 1000 and House Bill 1300 with amendments and is requesting that the funding model be clarified.

I. **Washington County is Requesting a Waiver of the Prekindergarten Restrictions – Limiting Prekindergarten Opportunities is Contrary to the Intent of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.**

Washington County Public Schools has a robust, full-day prekindergarten program staffed with certified teachers and paraprofessionals with a proven record of success.

As the direct result of a goal established by the Washington County Board of Education, the concerted effort of school system staff, and increased funding, it was recently reported that Washington County Public Schools' ("WCPS") prekindergarten program ranks 4th in the State of Maryland (previously 15th out of 24th) for achieving kindergarten readiness in comparison to other public school prekindergarten programs.

Since the 2016-2017 school year, the full-day capacity was increased from serving 180 full-day students to a capacity of 1,265 full-day students in the 2019-2020 school year at all of WCPS' twenty-five (25) elementary schools. The prekindergarten program is provided to all families at no cost to prepare all learners for the challenges of the 21st Century.

According to the Blueprint, beginning in the 2020-2021 school year, eligible private providers must account for at least 30% of eligible providers in each county and these providers are to increase over time (5% every school year) until the percentage of private providers is at least 50% of eligible prekindergarten providers. (page 123, lines 15 to 22) WCPS' current prekindergarten enrollment (1,128) represents approximately 70% of the four (4) year olds in the county. This trend is expected to continue.

This new proposed model penalizes families who reside in counties that are eligible for disparity grants, such as Washington County, and whose children are defined as a "Tier II child or Tier III child." The model is in direct conflict with a major objective of the Blueprint, which is to give children access to educational experiences and opportunities beginning in early childhood that enable them to reach their full promise and potential and be ready for success in college and a rewarding career by the end of high school.

Washington County and other similarly situated counties should be granted, upon request, a waiver under the Blueprint to provide all families with access to a quality public school prekindergarten program at no cost¹ and to expand their public school prekindergarten program without any limitations. Page 123, lines 23 to 33 of the bill should be amended to allow successful programs like the prekindergarten program in Washington County to continue without any limitations on expansion or on granting access to all families to a public prekindergarten program.

II. There is a Need for a Plan for Additional Educators to Implement the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future.

Currently, there is a statewide shortage of educators, particularly in the areas of math, science, English, and special education. The model set forth in the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future, Senate Bill 1000 and House Bill 1300 (“Blueprint”), requires a dramatic increase in the number of educators to implement the Blueprint with fidelity.

Is there a plan to address this concern? Which new state agency is charged with addressing this concern?

III. Will Funding be Provided to Achieve Basic Adequacy and Also to Fully Implement the Blueprint?

Based upon a report issued by the Maryland Department of Legislative Services in 2017, twenty (20) school systems are not adequately funded as required by the Maryland Constitution.

Does the funding in the Blueprint provide every local board of education with basic adequate funding? Will the funding in the Blueprint provide sufficient funds to implement the Blueprint with fidelity?

In order to develop budgets and to engage in meaningful collective bargaining negotiations, local boards of education need to understand with certainty how much funding will be provided and over what period of time. It is difficult to ascertain the actual funding that will be provided under the various funding formulas. The funding model must be clarified.

Has the wealth factor been adjusted for counties that do not tax personal business property? If not, such counties’ wealth is being understated.

How were the twelve (12) counties selected for the transition grant? Transition grants should be provided to all local boards of education that currently are not adequately funded as required by the Maryland Constitution.

¹ WCPS Superintendent Boyd J. Michael, III testified before the Kirwan Commission on September 28, 2017, and offered the following recommendations:

1. Every student should be afforded the opportunity to attend full-day prekindergarten at no cost to parents or guardians.
2. Any student who is not performing at grade level should be provided a customized education plan with dedicated resources so that the student’s full potential is realized.
3. Every student should be provided a program of studies that will prepare the student for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st Century in postsecondary education and careers.