



# Maryland Education Coalition



INSPIRES ACTION & POSITIVE CHANGE SO MARYLAND'S STUDENTS SUCCEED

Rick Tyler, Jr., Chair

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February 19, 2020

TO: Ways and Means Committee  
Delegate Ann Kaiser, Chair

RE: HB0347- Education - Community and Local Accountability for Struggling Schools (CLASS) Act of 2020  
- Innovation Schools

POSITION: Oppose

The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) opposes House Bill 347 - Education - Community and Local Accountability for Struggling Schools (CLASS) Act of 2020 - Innovation Schools. We believe that this bill as written, fails to several concerns of MEC and other public education stakeholders.

MEC is concern with several section of House Bill 347. This includes the knowledge that the majority of the Maryland Public Schools with a One Star Rating are also located school districts that are significantly underfunded, with relatively few local options to close the funding gap without additional assistance. In addition, several school district’s enrollment are also has have some of the largest numbers or percentages of students identified as Special Needs, Limited English or Lower income with a majority-minority enrollment and less wealth measured by jurisdiction or student.

Therefore, additional funding and other supports are required to ensure each student has adequate, equitable access to a high quality education that will allow each to graduate college or career-ready.

Some members or the committee, general assembly or administration may also be surprised to know that the only One Star schools in one of these districts – Prince George’s – are schools for students not enrolled in a normal school setting. They are:

- [Croom High](#) (Vocational)
- [Tall Oaks High](#) (Vocational)
- [Northwestern Evening/Saturday High](#)
- [Crossland Evening/Saturday High](#)
- [Community Based Classrooms](#) 16-21 years old

**NOTE:** There are numerous reasons why students are enrolled in the schools above and we believe recently approved policies or recommendations will allow these students and schools to improve with additional or new resources and supports.

House Bill 347 also does not appear to consider several critical issues including:

- What is already required in federal law under federal law or regulations including the [Every Student Succeeds Act of 2016 \(ESSA\)](#)
- The [Maryland State ESSA State Plan](#) approved by the U. S. Department of Education including the Star Program
- Several related laws or regulations approved in recent years by the General Assembly or the Maryland State Board of Education related to the [Maryland Report Card](#) and the [Star System](#)

- The technical support and professional development provided to each school systems to address the current star system including those schools with one star
- The ongoing changes and implementation of the assessments and other indicators used to rate schools using the star system
- Updates pending with the State Board of Education on the State's Graduation Policies and Regulations based on the recommendations of the [Graduation Task Force](#), MSDE and other submittals
- The years of work found in the [Study of Adequacy of Funding for Education in the State Of Maryland](#), which included significant input of dozens of local, state and national administrators and experts statewide leading to the three years of work by the [Kirwan Commission](#) and the ongoing implementation of their recommendations that we hope to complete this year.

HB 347 also appears to assume that many school systems do not already have evidence-based programs and other tools in place to address low performing schools, students and even staff, when in fact they exist, but often lack adequate resources to fully implement them more successfully. The bill also appears to take critical stakeholders out of the decision-making process with real experience and expertise on school improvement, program development, implementation and maintenance. It also assumes that the Maryland State Department of Education which is also underfunded and understaffed can provide oversight or technical support without new or additional resources.

In addition, for over a decade it has been well-known and verified independently, that several Maryland Public School systems have been significantly underfunded hundreds of millions including those with the least wealth, highest numbers of students of color, disabilities or lower income known to cost to educate with fewer supports and opportunities to have high quality access to a quality education within their communities.

Although additional funding is not the only solution, we believe the state, public education staff and stakeholders are truly committed to adequacy and equity and we must provide every school community what their students truly need that is evidence-based.

The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) has been in existence for over 40 years we have been advocating for adequate, equitable funding and systematic accountability in and for Maryland's public schools. Our representatives have extensive experiences at all levels throughout the local, state and national public education system and the meanings and values evidence programs and practices as well as their evaluation and maintenance using meaningful stakeholder participation in the decision-making process defined in law.

Finally, MEC in general supports local control, but we also believe that some policies, guidelines and resources must be standardized statewide to ensure adequacy and equity.

Therefore, we urge the committee to find HB0347- Education - Community and Local Accountability for Struggling Schools (CLASS) Act of 2020 - Innovation Schools unfavorable