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March 5, 2021

BILL: SB0915 -The Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Performance Standards - Clarifications

POSITION: Strongly Support

COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

To Whom It May Concern:

Arts Education in Maryland Schools wants to first thank Senator McCray for bringing this amendment forward and for continuing to put the needs of our students and families first. Arts Education in Maryland Schools is a statewide nonprofit that is committed to ensuring that all students in the state of Maryland have access to high quality arts education by mobilizing power to communities through advocacy programs, professional and leadership programs, and resource building and sharing. AEMS envisions a public education system in Maryland that supports, cultivates, nurtures, and uplifts ALL students' creativity through a robust arts education experience so that they can thrive in a healthy society.

It is in the service of this vision of a public school system with equitable access to arts education that AEMS strongly supports the approval of SB 915-The Blueprint for Maryland's Future-Performance Standards-Clarifications as a technical amendment to HB1300-Blueprint for Maryland's Future. This technical amendment will, correctly, clarify the use of the term "performance standards" by linking adequate funding to providing those resources necessary for schools to meet the standards and requirements laid out in the [Maryland COMAR Regulations, Title 13A State Board of Education](#). This is a necessary technical amendment, since COMAR provides a concise list of all of the components of a well-rounded, holistic educational experience for Maryland students, including the arts (COMAR 13A.04.16). Without this as clarification, the existing biases towards standardized tested subjects will continue to prevail, and students across Maryland will continue to be deprived both of their civil right to arts education under COMAR and of a necessary component of human development and 21st century preparedness.

Arts education [supports the social-emotional well-being](#) of students, a dire need in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to being a vital area of study in its own right, student [participation in the arts increases student performance](#) and engagement in all other areas of learning. The creative mentalities cultivated through arts learning are [increasingly](#)

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[sought-after in the workplace](#) as being essential to 21st century employers, with “creativity” topping the list of valuable assets by over 1,500 CEOs around the globe.

AEMS also believes this technical change is consistent with the [Maryland's ESSA Plan approved by the USDOE](#) to ensure that all students within all student groups have access to a well-rounded curriculum in all grades, including robust access to arts courses and experiences. AEMS believes that this technical amendment is consistent with the intent of the Kirwan Commission on how the State can better prepare students for postsecondary education and to be competitive in the workforce and with other high performing countries in the global economy.

Therefore, we urge support of SB 915, to help ensure all students have access to quality, well-rounded education.

Quanice Floyd
AEMS Executive Director

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