



To: Chair Kaiser and members of the Ways and Means Committee
From: Shanetta Martin, Education Policy Assistant Director, Advocates for Children and Youth
Re: HB1372/SB965: Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Revisions
Date: March 15, 2021
Position: Favorable Support

Supporting HB 1372 will further demonstrate a strong commitment to and investment in Maryland's economic future by ensuring that, regardless of zip code, all children and youth in our state will receive a high-quality public education. By supporting implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, public education in our state will be grounded in:

1. Greater access for families to early childhood education
2. High-quality and diverse teachers and leaders
3. Accessible college and career readiness pathways
4. Stronger governance and accountability processes
5. A range of resources that will support the social-emotional, physical, and academic success of all students

The opportunity could not have come at a better time. As for people all over the world, life has been disrupted for children in our state by the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact is far-reaching as students, their families, along with the entire academic community within public education have experienced the challenges of adjusting to almost a full year of online learning, food insecurity, economic instability, and for some – the pain of losing loved ones to the deadly disease. The time is now to lay the foundation that will not only strengthen the infrastructure that will develop robust learning and teaching opportunities for all students including those that are most vulnerable, but also to support addressing COVID-related impacts such as learning loss, the need to close the digital divide, additional wrap-around services to support the behavioral and mental health needs of students, along with resources that will ensure the safe return to school buildings.

In alignment with this HB 1372, we urge equitable distribution of Blueprint funds and careful consideration of the allocation of Concentration of Poverty Grants that will serve communities most in need. Particular populations to note include special education students, English Language Learners, and students from low-income communities. We also urge you to protect and preserve dollars set aside specifically for the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Fund in the future and continue to build the reserve so that the Blueprint will be fully and adequately funded through FY 26 where there is currently a shortfall in that final year.

Suggested amendments:

[Proposed Amendment #1](#)



p. 22, Lines 21-25: Revise line 24 to read: "...number of semester core course failures, **attendance rates, and number of suspensions and expulsions** for students during the first year of high school for students completing the 9th grade year."

Purpose: Research shows that 9th grade students who fail 2 or more core course, attend school < 90% of required days, and that have more than 2 suspensions or expulsions are off-track graduate high school. Tracking Early Warning Indicators, which are attendance, grades, and behavior in combination will provide the full picture of what types of interventions are needed to support struggling students and get them back on track to graduate. (Source: Johns Hopkins University, Everyone Graduates Center, Robert Balfanz – "On Track for Success, The Use of Early Warning Indicator and Intervention Systems to Build a Grad Nation")

Proposed Amendment #2

p. 22, Lines 26-28: Revise line 27 to read: "...to the school where the student is enrolled for further academic **tiered** interventions to allow the student to graduate on time."

Purpose: Research shows that tiered interventions across the full grade band, group, and individual level interventions help students get back on track to graduate. (Source: Johns Hopkins University, Everyone Graduates Center, Robert Balfanz – "On Track for Success, The Use of Early Warning Indicator and Intervention Systems to Build a Grad Nation")

Proposed Amendment #3

p. 27, Lines 19-22: Revise Line 19 to read: "enhance and expand school behavioral health service and social emotional learning availability to ensure that all students have some exposure and access to behavioral health programming, social emotional learning, and services..."

Purpose: Round out access to social and emotional supports and aid in the creation of a positive school climate for all students including those who do not trigger the behavioral services yet need support to thrive.

We urge favorable support for HB1372. Thank you.