



Mohammed Choudhury
State Superintendent of Schools

BILL: House Bill 1450 **DATE:** March 29, 2022

SUBJECT: Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Implementation Plans and Fund - Alterations **COMMITTEE:** Budget and Taxation

POSITION: Favorable with Amendments

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EXPLANATION:

Thank you for the opportunity to work collaboratively this session on behalf of all students in the State of Maryland. I am writing today to ask that HB1450 be modified to include additional changes to support high quality Blueprint implementation in Fiscal Year 2023 and beyond. While the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is meeting the deadlines outlined in the Blueprint, these proposed changes are smart policy and reflect a strategic approach to ensure high quality implementation:

1. **Adjust the College and Career Readiness Implementation Timeline.** Current law (Section 7-205.1 of the Education Article) requires local educational agencies to develop and implement (1) for students who have demonstrated College and Career Readiness (CCR), "post-CCR pathways," and (2) for students who have not demonstrated College and Career Readiness by the end of 10th grade, programs of support or "CCR support pathways." The post-CCR pathways are to be implemented by the 2023-24 school year and the CCR support pathways are to be implemented by the 2022-23 school year.

This is a massive workstream that will require local school systems to - at a minimum - develop new courses and reimagine schedules and staffing structures, train teachers, develop new individualized support plans for a large number of students, develop articulation agreements with local institutions of higher education and employers, and more. I want to call your attention to a few passages from the 2019 Interim Report of the Kirwan Commission that detail the vision of the supports to students:

Students in middle and high school who are not progressing to meet the CCR standard by the end of the tenth grade do not need "more of the same." Instead, they require alternative approaches that are tailored to their specific circumstances and needs...

The State and school districts must develop a set of programs and curriculum options specially designed to support and advance students who have not achieved CCR by the end of grade 10. The goal is to equip them to achieve CCR by the end of grade 12. Though aimed at the same standard, these options will be much more applied, experiential, and "hands on," including curriculum focused on the arts. They should yield courses and curricula that are project- and problem-based and highly engaging. (Consultants from countries that have built highly engaging curriculum of this sort may be engaged to

help develop this curriculum.) Students will not be required to retake the courses in which they have not succeeded. It will in that sense not be a remedial curriculum at all...

Any student who has not achieved CCR by the end of tenth grade will be assigned a teacher who acts as a case manager for that student, with overall responsibility for the success of that student, supported by all the other teachers of that student, assembled as a team under the leadership of the cognizant teacher to monitor that student's progress and do whatever is needed to get and keep that student on track, including visits to the student's parents or guardian and collaboration with public and private agencies providing various forms of support to that student and his or her family. Students who are struggling in schools benefit greatly from individual attention from their teachers and other adults...

Students who have not achieved CCR by the end of grade 10 will be given priority access to a greatly enhanced career counseling system designed in part to make the connection between the hopes they have for themselves and what they need to achieve in school in order to achieve those hopes.

While we are appreciative of the timeline change already included in HB1450 that would give one additional year for the development of CCR support pathways, MSDE believes the timeline should be expanded by an additional year to allow for the level of strategic planning and community engagement that local school systems must conduct to do this well. An expanded time period will allow MSDE to give hands-on guidance and support to increase the likelihood this work is done well across the state. Finally, an expanded timeline will allow the implementation of an updated CCR standard informed by the results of the two studies MSDE is conducting on the most appropriate measures of College and Career Readiness. Amending the timeline will allow the first year of CCR pathway implementation to be based upon factors in addition to standardized test scores, including promising alternatives such as, for example, Grade Point Averages. Best in class studies have validated that these other factors are better predictors of success in college and less biased than standardized tests, especially for historically disadvantaged students. It is especially important to evolve the definition of the CCR standard in this way to avoid unnecessarily tracking historically disadvantaged students into remedial and low-level pathways in the first year of implementation. **For these reasons, MSDE respectfully requests that the committee amend HB1450 so that it will adjust Sec. 7-205.1(e)(1)(i) to replace “2022-2023” with “2024-2025” and Sec. 7-205.1(g)(1) to replace “2023-2024” with “2024-2025.”**

Current Statute	HB1450 As Drafted	MSDE Proposed Amendment
(e) (1) (i) Each county board, in collaboration with the community colleges, shall develop and implement by the 2022-2023 school year a program of study for students who have not met the CCR standard by the end of 10th grade.	(e) (1) (i) Each county board, in collaboration with the community colleges, shall develop and implement by the 2023-2024 school year a program of study for students who have not met the CCR standard by the end of 10th grade.	(e) (1) (i) Each county board, in collaboration with the community colleges, shall develop and implement by the 2024-2025 school year a program of study for students who have not met the CCR standard by the end of 10th grade.
(g)(1) Beginning in the 2023-2024 school year, each county board shall provide all students who meet the CCR standard required under subsection (c) of this section with access to the following post college and career readiness (Post-CCR) pathways, at no cost to the student or the student's parents, including the cost of any fees	(g)(1) Beginning in the 2023-2024 school year, each county board shall provide all students who meet the CCR standard required under subsection (c) of this section with access to the following post college and career readiness (Post-CCR) pathways, at no cost to the student or the student's parents, including the cost of any fees	(g)(1) Beginning in the 2024-2025 school year, each county board shall provide all students who meet the CCR standard required under subsection (c) of this section with access to the following post college and career readiness (Post-CCR) pathways, at no cost to the student or the student's parents, including the cost of any fees.

2. **Adjust the Timeline for Automatic Withholding of Funds Language.** While the MSDE wholeheartedly supports the implementation plan timeline adjustment proposed in HB1450, it is imperative that the timeline changes do not delay districts' receipt of critical implementation funds. With this in mind, the MSDE asks for the following alteration to the bill.

HB 1450's proposed timeline change makes the due date for local school systems' initial implementation plans March 15, 2023. Due to the automatic withholding language in the law, local school districts will have to operate 9 months of the fiscal year without access to 25% of the increase in State aid funding over the prior year. Next year districts are expected to build substantial new Blueprint programs and systems. It is also the first fiscal year in which districts will operate within the new Blueprint State Aid formula, which means the amount of funds to be withheld is significantly higher than it will be in the following year. MSDE estimates that automatic withholding of the 25% increase in State share of major education aid will be \$119,943,503, of which \$79,962,336 would be withheld until after March, 2023. Withholding access to the funds designed to support this work will undermine the intent of the Blueprint. **MSDE respectfully requests that HB1450 adjust Sec. 5-405(b) and (c) to replace "2023" with "2024" and to remove HB1450's proposed Sec. 5-405(c)(1).**

Both changes have been previewed publicly and are based on consultation with local school systems. On January 24, 2022, MSDE gave a [detailed presentation](#) on the College and Career Readiness (CCR) portion of the Blueprint, featuring a need for a change in the timeline at our State Board of Education meeting. On February 14, 2022 and February 28th, 2022, I presented an [overview of Blueprint Implementation](#) with the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB), which previewed both the need for a change in the CCR timeline and the need to ensure that any timeline changes do not lead to a delay in districts receiving critical state funds for education. To maximize student benefit, implementation of the pathways requires strong alignment between the Post-CCR and Support Pathways and for educators to be supported through tailored professional learning. This proposal will allow for MSDE to partner with LEAs on effective implementation and support districts with the technical assistance needed to "Guarantee, to the extent practicable, statewide uniformity in the quality of the post-CCR pathways (§7-205.1(g)(4))."

MSDE wants to ensure that this process is thoughtful and successful, rather than being rushed and resulting in innovations that are poorly planned and ultimately dismissed. As a former chief strategy officer who has worked to successfully transform two large, urban, and majority Title I school districts, I will always push for faster approaches to implementing change. As your State Superintendent of Schools, I do not make this timeline revision proposal lightly. **I strongly urge that you consider these amendments as favorable while deliberating HB1450.**

Sincerely,



Mohammed Choudhury
State Superintendent of Schools

CC:

Senate President William C. Ferguson IV
Members of the Budget & Taxation Committee