

BALTIMORE CITY

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BALTIMORE CITY BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS

Testimony of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners In Support with Amendments Senate Bill 862 Baltimore City – Maryland Transit Administration Transit Services for Public School Students

March 10, 2022

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners supports Senate Bill 862 which provides ridership on transit vehicles to any Baltimore City Public School student from fiscal year 2023 through fiscal year 2027 (5 years).

Unlike other school districts in the state, but similar to other urban school districts across the country, Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) uses the state transit system for students that must travel to school more than a mile from their homes. In 2017, when legislation was first passed to provide for MTA to provide transit services, there were approximately 30,000 students eligible to ride Maryland Transit Authority (MTA) in City Schools. With the current underfunding of City Schools, the necessity of MTA to continue to provide ridership is essential.

The current Blueprint legislation, while delayed one year, will help with the chronic underfunding of City Schools because it recognizes concentration of poverty, but will not resolve all funding issues, as it is a 10 year plan and the school children had to forgo many resources over decades due to lack of funding.

When Consultants presented the final Adequacy Study Report to the Kirwan Commission in December 2016, the study revealed that Baltimore City Schools needed an additional \$358 million annually to ensure an adequate education for Baltimore's students. Similarly, an analysis conducted by the state's own Department of Legislative Services found during this same time period that if the inflation factor not been eliminated from the current education funding formula, an additional \$290 million per year would have been available to adequately educate Baltimore's children.

Under the current fee for service contract with MTA, students receive a nontransferable monthly pass which allows them to use MTA. The pass is called a One Card. Under the current contract with MTA, eligible students can ride from 5a.m. to 8 pm.

The proposed legislation would have a positive fiscal impact on City Schools. As drafted, it allows for approximately eligible Baltimore students to have hassle-free access to travel to and from

school using MTA. Currently, an average of 22,000 use MTA daily. The estimated cost savings if students ride MTA free is \$6.1 million to the school system.

The school board request one minor amendment to the legislation. The first is to change the SMART CARD listed in the legislation to the ONE CARD.

For the foregoing reasons, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners supports Senate Bill 862 and urges a favorable report.

Amendment

Page 2, line 7 replace SMART with ONE

Dawana Merritt Sterrette, Esq
Director, Governmental and Legislative Relations
443-250-0190

Melissa Broome
Director, Policy and Legislative Affairs
443-525-3038