

BILL: House Bill 1450
TITLE: Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Implementation Plans and Fund - Alterations
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
DATE: March 29, 2022
COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the State's local boards of education, strongly supports House Bill 1450, with amendments to address serious problems with the timing and condition for releasing withheld Blueprint funding, and to adjust timelines for implementing the major reforms to college and career readiness programs.

MABE supports this bill in order to extend dates for the development, adoption, and submission of plans to implement the Blueprint for Maryland's Future; alter the date by which the state criteria to evaluate local implementation plans must be developed; and modify the distribution of revenues to the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Fund. Specifically, the bill:

- Extends the State Implementation Plan deadline from Feb. 15, 2022 to Dec. 1, 2022;
- Extends the MSDE deadline for plan criteria from April 1, 2022 to Sept. 1, 2022;
- Extends the local implementation plan deadline extended from June 15, 2022 to March 15, 2023; and
- Revises the formula for dedicated sales tax revenue to the Blueprint Fund.

In addition to these extensions, MABE is aware of the need for the consideration of additional extensions for implementation timelines for other major programs being developed under the Blueprint. Specifically, MABE joins local school systems and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to request that the committee amend House Bill 1450 so that it will adjust Section 7-205.1(e)(1)(i) to replace "2022-2023" with "2024-2025" and Section 7-205.1(g)(1) to replace "2023-2024" with "2024-2025." These amendments reflect the need to align the massive amount of work required to develop and implement the array of college and career readiness programs through the criteria established by MSDE, the oversight of the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB), and the operational, programming, and instructional reforms necessary in each local school systems.

In addition, MABE requests amendments to the provisions governing the withholding of increased state Blueprint funding to align with the extended date for the completion of local implementation plans. House Bill 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 systems would have to operate 9 months of the fiscal year without access to 25% of the increase in State funding over the prior year. Withholding access to these funds would undermine the intent of the Blueprint. Therefore, MABE joins local school systems and MSDE to request that amendments to adjust Section 5-405(b) and (c) to replace "2023" with "2024" and to remove Section 5-405(c)(1).

Local boards are committed to the success of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Act and believes the provisions of this bill are consistent achieving that success. MABE led the advocacy effort to create the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education precisely so that an updated adequacy study and other funding and accountability issues could be debated and transformed into legislation to update and improve Maryland's school finance system. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future Act represents the culmination of these efforts.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 1450 with the amendments described above in order to ensure a smooth and successful launch to the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Act.