

**2023\_SB814\_MSDETestimony\_Support\_WRITTEN\_FINAL.pdf**

Uploaded by: Justin Dayhoff

Position: FAV



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**BILL:** Senate Bill (SB) 814 **DATE:** February 24, 2023

**SUBJECT:** Promise Schools - Establishment **COMMITTEE:** Education, Energy, and the Environment

**POSITION:** Support

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The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) supports **Senate Bill 814**, which establishes a new, Statewide program, the Promise Schools program, to address persistently low-performing schools head on. Currently, Maryland does not have a consequential process for formally turning around and transforming persistently low-performing schools and supporting the educators and support staff in those schools. Senate Bill 814 requires MSDE to establish a nationally benchmarked, evidence-based process to formally designate and subsequently transform persistently low-performing schools to accelerate student outcomes and support educator success.

Though the Promise Schools model would be new to Maryland – the approach itself is not new and evidence supports adoption. For example, the Education Policy Innovation Collaborative at Michigan State University just this fall found that students participating in Michigan’s version of a school improvement model during the pandemic:

*“...made similar and, in some cases, greater gains on their benchmark assessments than did students in demographically and academically similar districts across the state. This suggests that while the COVID-19 pandemic generated immense challenges for student learning, the many services and supports Partnership schools and districts offered may have mitigated some of the negative effect.”<sup>1</sup>*

The evidence in Michigan follows data from other states, like Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in collaboration with the American Institutes for Research found in 2013 and again in 2016 that students in School Redesign Grant (SRG) schools (the Massachusetts iteration of this model):

*“...performed better on the English language arts and mathematics sections of standardized state assessments than students in non-SRG schools.”<sup>23</sup>*

Data from Massachusetts are particularly instructive given the influence of many Massachusetts policy ideas codified in the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. This bill creatively leverages existing formula mechanisms in the Blueprint to fund Promise School program efforts via the Concentration of Poverty grant phase-in provision of the bill. Moreover, the bill’s stable annual appropriation ensures that, once a school begins performing well, the State

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<sup>1</sup> [https://epicedpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Yr4\\_PartnershipRpt\\_Full.pdf](https://epicedpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Yr4_PartnershipRpt_Full.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/howitworks/research-brief.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/School-Redesign-Grants-Massachusetts-Implementation-Study-September-2016.pdf>

does not pull the rug out from under the school by sunseting the investments that are making the school successful.

Clear guardrails in the bill ensure that the law must be applied rigorously and require the Department to build, implement, and enforce a consistent process for administering the program – a task the Department takes seriously and one which MSDE stands ready to lead. This bill is anchored in and lays out all the necessary elements for a successful, research-based school transformation plan and framework to ensure Maryland is equipped to empower schools that need the most attention. See, for example, the Accelerating Campus Excellence framework, which:

*“...ensures that not only are a district’s more effective teachers working with the students with larger needs, but that the school is seen as a safe, warm, welcoming place, where children’s social-emotional needs are met”.*<sup>45</sup>

In addition, the bill’s alignment with the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future and the strengthening of community school implementation plans are critical components of the bill and will stand only to bolster program success.

Equally important in this bill is the consequence of not seeing results. This bill, if enacted, will not force a school’s students to remain in a school that continues to underperform. Instead, in a school that does not meet improvement goals after three years, families are able to select a non-low-performing public school of their choice in their current local education agency (LEA) or another LEA in the State and be able to enroll (including transportation) in that school.

This program will ensure Maryland can close opportunity and achievement gaps for all Maryland’s children using effective, research-based strategies for school improvement. MSDE is eager for the opportunity to implement the provisions of this bill, if enacted, in partnership with local education agencies while not compromising on the expectation of student and educator success for those in persistently underperforming schools. The Maryland State Department of Education respectfully requests that you consider this information as you deliberate **Senate Bill 814** and MSDE urges a favorable report. Please contact Justin Dayhoff, at 410-767-0439, or [justin.dayhoff@maryland.gov](mailto:justin.dayhoff@maryland.gov), for any additional information.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://commitpartnership.org/blog/equity-works-ace-results>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.dallasisd.org/cms/lib/TX01001475/Centricity/domain/98/evaluation/21-22/acadpe/EA22-601-2%20FULL%20Accelerating%20Campus%20Excellence%20ACE%20Program.pdf>



**LBCMD letter of support SB814.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ufuoma Agarin

Position: FAV



**LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, Inc.**

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Dear Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of The Committee: The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland Inc. has voted to offer favorable support for **Senate Bill 814 - Promise Schools – Establishment**. This bill is a 2023 legislative priority of the Black Caucus.

Senate Bill 814 will allow the State Department of Education to identify schools that need help with performance issues and in need of comprehensive support, and designate these schools as “promise schools”. These schools will receive additional funding and support, will be thoroughly analyzed by the local county board of education which will be followed by a plan to improve school outcomes. The schools will also be monitoring students performing poorly, and will transfer schools for the student at the request of the county board to help improve individual performance outcomes. The State Superintendent of Schools will be appointing a Director of Promise Schools, who will help develop an implementation plan and who will oversee this program.

Educational outcomes in Maryland have historically been lower for black students and students of color than for white students. According to the 2022 Maryland Comprehensive Assessment, black and latino students scored 20-40 percentage points lower than white students in math, English language proficiency, reading and writing comprehension, and English language arts. These achievement gaps are unacceptable, and we need to combat the continuing disparity by giving our school systems the support they need to help students reach their full potential. These schools and students are full of potential, and this bill will make sure to draw out that potential by funding them at appropriate levels, and transferring students to environments where they can thrive. I fully support the mission of SB814, and the Black Legislative Caucus is fully behind Senator A. Washington’s initiative.

# **SB0814 Promise\_Schools - Establishment\_FWA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jared Schablein

Position: FWA



## TESTIMONY FOR SB0814

### Promise Schools - Establishment

**Bill Sponsor:** Senator Washington

**Committee:** Education, Energy, and the Environment

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Cecilia Plante, co-chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0814 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of individuals and grassroots groups with members in every district in the state with well over 30,000 members.

Maryland is an extremely diverse state. With its big metropolitan areas and its rural Eastern Shore and mountainous Western Maryland counties, it is hard to find a lot of commonality in experience. The goal, though, is to ensure that children across this great state have a similar educational experience and opportunity. But that is something that is hard to achieve. Not every county or jurisdiction has equivalent resources, whether they are financial resources or faculty/teacher resources.

This bill seeks to help the schools that are struggling the most. It requires that the Department of Education identify at least 10 low-performing schools each year and make them Promise Schools. Once identified, the County Board for each county that has a Promise School will perform a comprehensive analysis of the key factors that contribute to the school's low performance. Once that analysis is complete, a three-year plan will be put in place to solve the issues that are keeping students from performing. The plan could include salary increases for recruitment/retention; programs and initiatives that accelerate student learning; tutoring; staff development; and other wraparound services. Funding would be provided to accomplish the plan.

Performance will be monitored for the three-year period. If, at the end of the three years, the school's performance has not improved, students will be allowed to transfer to other non-Promise Schools in the area and will have their transportation costs reimbursed.

While we are strongly supportive of the Promise School program, and believe that it is innovative as well as badly needed, we think that having students transfer to other schools is not a practical solution, particularly in rural areas where there is no alternative school nearby. We believe that after two years, if the Promise School's performance has not improved, a new comprehensive analysis should be made and the a new plan put in place. Additionally, the Promise School at that point, should partner with a high-performing school to help meet the plan goals and improve performance.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report in committee.



# **2-24 SB 814 \_Promise Schools - Establishment.pdf**

Uploaded by: Gail Sunderman

Position: UNF



## TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

### SB 814 Promise Schools – Establishment

**POSITION: Oppose**

**BY: Nancy Soreng – President**

**Date: February 24, 2023**

The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) is a nonpartisan organization that works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. LWVMD supports programs and reforms that promote equal access to quality education and is committed to [diversity, equity, and inclusion](#) in principle and in practice.

This bill, SB 814 *Promise Schools - Establishment*, would designate a certain number of Community Schools that have been identified as low-performing or in need of improvement as promise schools. The bill specifies that the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must identify at least 10 eligible schools as promise schools, which would then be required to meet certain requirements. It mandates an annual appropriation of \$2,000,000 to support County boards with technical assistance.

**LWVMD opposes SB 814.** It's not clear whether this bill reinforces or competes with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, which is designed as a comprehensive approach to school improvement and is in the early stages of implementation. SB 814 competes by allocating funding to a new program rather than allocate additional resources to fully fund the Blueprint. It also competes with the Community Schools model, which offers an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement. Community Schools is an [evidence-based](#) strategy that is appropriate for students of all backgrounds and has a positive impact on educational outcomes. There is no comparable research on the efficacy of promise schools.

Limiting the number of promise schools to 10 runs the risk of introducing subjective criteria into the selection of "low performing" schools since it relies on the judgment of MSDE officials to designate 10 schools as promise schools. The current five star rating system used to identify low performing schools is highly flawed, as it over identifies high poverty schools as low-performing. An [analysis of the Maryland five-star rating system](#) from the [Baltimore Education Research Consortium](#) documented the relationship between report card rating and the percentage of a school's economically disadvantaged students. No high-poverty school earned a five-star rating under the Maryland system thus reinforcing the influence of poverty rather than capturing the value added by educators. In contrast to promise schools, Community Schools are an option for all schools.

The bill does reinforce the Blueprint's focus on improving low-performing, high poverty schools, but because the number of potential promise schools is small, it's unclear whether its impact will be significant.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland urges the committee to give an unfavorable report to SB 814.

# **MD4CS\_SB814**

Uploaded by: Ellie Mitchell

Position: INFO



**Letter of Information: Senate Bill 814  
Promise Schools - Establishment  
February 24, 2023**

The Maryland Out of School Time Network (MOST) is a statewide organization dedicated to closing opportunity gaps by expanding both the quantity and quality of afterschool and summer learning opportunities for school-aged young people. MOST is one of the fifty statewide networks supported by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and serves as Maryland's affiliate to the National Afterschool Association. MOST serves as the backbone organization for the Maryland Coalition for Community Schools. The Maryland Coalition for Community Schools was founded in 2016 to advocate for student and family success by leading the charge to expand the Community School Model in Maryland.

The Maryland Coalition for Community Schools applauds the focus on Community Schools in Senate Bill 814 and the inclusion through amendments of some of the original language designed to implement Community Schools aligned to the national best practices framework that did not get included in the final version of the Blueprint. When implemented with fidelity, Community Schools will contribute to transforming schools' cultures and providing positive and productive learning environments.

The coalition supports investing more at the state and local levels to build quality systems of support for Community Schools. Currently, there is only one FTE with no additional resources at the state level to support more than 300 schools currently (which will be over 700 schools after the full phase-in). In addition, local school districts with fewer than forty schools have no administrative support for their community school implementation.

If Senate Bill 814 is enacted, we encourage the initiative to:

- Take a positive program improvement approach that engages school staff, students, and families in a restorative and asset-based process;
- Align with existing school improvement efforts and new initiatives within the Blueprint for Maryland's Future
- Align to the Essentials for Community School Transformation Framework recently released by the Community School Forward partnership: (Available online at [https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/media/3935/download?inline&file=CSF\\_Visual\\_Framework\\_Essentials\\_Community\\_School.pdf](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/media/3935/download?inline&file=CSF_Visual_Framework_Essentials_Community_School.pdf))

Ellie Mitchell

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**SB814\_MSEA\_Lamb\_INFO.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lauren Lamb

Position: INFO

## Informational Testimony regarding Senate Bill 814 Promise Schools - Establishment

Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment  
February 24, 2023

**Lauren Lamb**  
**Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association offers this informational testimony regarding Senate Bill 814, which would require the State Department of Education to designate 10 community schools that are identified as low-performing or in need of comprehensive support and improvement as promise schools each year, require a county board of education to perform a comprehensive analysis of key factors and causes that led to a school being low-performing or in need of comprehensive support and improvement, and require the Governor to include \$2,000,000 in the annual budget bill to support technical assistance and support for promise schools.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

We appreciate the intent of this legislation, which is to provide targeted resources to community schools in need of additional support. Universal school meals, for example, undoubtedly support students' learning. However, some of the measures required by the Promise School Plan would be challenging to implement. The school calendar is an illegal subject of collective bargaining in Maryland, meaning that unions representing school employees could not negotiate around an extended school year in a Promise School Plan.<sup>1</sup> It would also be essential to ensure that the

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland Educ. § 6-510(c)(3).

<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgaweb/Laws/StatuteText?article=ged&section=6-510&enactments=False&archived=False>



proposed educator bonuses are implemented equitably between current and incoming teachers and are reflective of an extended work schedule and expanded in-school professional development requirements.

Our greatest concern is with the proposed outcome for a Promise School that is determined by MSDE to have made insufficient progress at the end of its three-year plan. This legislation would permit the family of a student enrolled at an “unsuccessful” Promise School to transfer their child to another school at the county board’s expense, including to a school in another county. Such an arrangement could rapidly destabilize enrollment, wreaking havoc on funding, wraparound supports, and school culture by creating de facto school closures – an approach which research shows is “not a promising strategy for remedying low student performance” and carries risks to students’ well-being.<sup>2</sup>

While we continue to enthusiastically support investment in community schools, we urge the committee to consider these concerns while evaluating this legislation.

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<sup>2</sup> School Closure as a Strategy to Remedy Low Performance. National Education Policy Center (2017). <https://nepc.colorado.edu/sites/default/files/publications/PB%20Sunderman-Coghlan-Mintrop%20Closures.pdf>