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Board of Education of Howard County  
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland House of Delegates,  
Ways and Means Committee  
March 29, 2023

**SB0913: FAVORABLE AS INTRODUCED**  
**Education - Community Eligibility Provision Schools and Prekindergarten Enrollment and Funding – Alterations**

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **SB0913 Education - Community Eligibility Provision Schools and Prekindergarten Enrollment and Funding – Alterations** with original language to support school system expansion of prekindergarten.

As introduced, SB0913 reflected local school systems understanding of the intent of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future to expand universal access to prekindergarten for the state's most vulnerable populations. While children with disabilities, homeless youth, and children from homes in which English is not the primary spoken language are currently identified under Education Article §7-1A-06 as those who would be given priority in expanding prekindergarten slots to 3- and 4-year olds under the Blueprint regardless of income, existing Education Article §7-1A-01 which defines Tiers for purposes of funding does not include populations beyond income eligibility.

Underfunding for current populations being served in Howard County is compounded by the fact that the number of eligible prekindergarten students counted in the funding formula dropped significantly in FY2024 compared to FY2023 (421 compared to 1,320) due to a proxy used by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to determine eligibility in FY2023 that included all enrolled students regardless of income, full-day vs. half-day, or disability, homeless, or English learner status. For the 421 prekindergarten students eligible under the current §7-1A-01 definition in FY2024, Howard County's state share is \$1,848,016. The HCPSS Office of Early Intervention Services, which oversees programs for prekindergarten students with disabilities, indicates 134 four-year-old students, regardless of family income, were enrolled as of September 30, 2022, in full-day slots, which equates to approximately \$588,204 in the state share of prekindergarten funding, a 32% increase in available state funding if SB0913 were to pass as originally introduced. Additional information gathering would be needed to determine the funding impact of adding children who are homeless youths, and children who are from homes in which English is not the primary spoken language.

Although amendments made to SB0913 and differing amendments made by this Committee to its cross-file HB0770 attempt to bring down the estimated price tag associated with the bill as introduced, full funding of each priority population similar to Tier I students is in the best interest of serving our youngest learners in Howard County and across the state. The original language would appropriately count students being served by HCPSS this school year, and encourage expansion expected across all prekindergarten programs as Blueprint is further implemented.

With the original language restored related to prekindergarten funding, we urge a FAVORABLE report of SB0913 from this Committee.