

A Plea for the Blueprint for Maryland

Maryland Y Youth & Government

This document is written not from the voice of a politician, public financier, or activist, but the earnest conviction of the students of the State of Maryland. In the midst of the current fiscal panic that has swept over the capital, we set forth a case that not only is the Blueprint for Maryland a prudent investment, but also one that must be championed as a defining accomplishment of this legislature.

It has always been the firstmost objection of those skeptical of the Blueprint to critique the immense fiscal burden it entails. Indeed, this programme is not an inexpensive one, but the magnitude of its cost corresponds to the sublimity of its effects, both civil and economical. The greatest fallacy lies in the presumption that education is some ethereal public good that primarily may enhance the private lives of its benefactors but does not take account of any social or economic transformation. Indeed, just the contrary may be proven with regard to each major focus;

1) On the Universalization of Pre-Kindergarten

Numerous states have enacted Universal Pre-Kindergarten initiatives over the past three decades with remarkable empirical success. Reports of widespread ‘gains in cognitive development’ of which ‘racial and ethnic groups and children from all socioeconomic brackets benefit’ have begun to surface, raising important points concerning human capital development.^[1] Setting aside the numerous benefits from, ‘school readiness and child development to employability, to women’s equality, balancing work and family, reducing poverty, alleviating at-risk status and social integration,’ the economic consensus is clear.^[2] From neuroscientists to economists, the consensus is that ‘returns on investment in the early child development period exceed investment in any other period of human development.’^[2] The issue of course is that the realization of this investment takes two forms, where only the first is easily visible. Immediately there is an economic improvement, particularly for low-income families, in the alleviation of certain child care expenditures, but the real investment, which is in the children themselves, takes decades for the effects to be visible.

2) On the Qualification of Teachers

One of the great ambitions of the Blueprint is the competitive salary offered to teachers. Indeed, the same remarkable effects attributed to Universal Pre-Kindergarten have empirically been found to correlate also to high teacher salaries and high-quality academic credentials.^[1] Where diminishing teacher salaries have been found to increase urban-suburban divides as teachers flock from worse parent and administration systems, poor salaries have led to disastrous teacher turnovers, shortages, and under qualifications.^{[3][4]} The effect

of sustaining high teacher salaries is profound in economic implication. As higher quality teachers are hired, students become, ‘more likely to attend college, earn higher salaries, and are less likely to have children as teenagers.’^[5] Once more the loss from not investing in the Blueprint is long-term economic development, which in turn diminishes the economic position of the state more than any temporary deficit.

3) On the Creation of Career Pathways for Students

Yet again the shifting of the educational consensus toward career pathway programmes and Career and Technical Education creates an indispensable obligation of the State toward the Blueprint. The direct workforce contribution of these programs constitute thousands of well-paying, middle-skill jobs.^[6] Whereas the standard college-centred curricula of the orthodox educational pathway only appeals to about a third of the student population, extraordinary empirical success have been found in career-centred pathways, particularly in highly competitive fields in technology sectors.^[7]

The Blueprint for Maryland, contrary to the wary sentiment of its discontents, is not a reckless exercise in unchecked spending, but a deliberate and radical motion toward social advancement—backed by the foremost developments in economic, educational, scientific, and sociological literature. Its defence is not the unrepentant avarice of an expanding government, but the just deliverance of the populace from austerity. Shall we deviate from the grandeur envisioned half a decade ago in our paralyzing terror of deficit spending? Shall we be guided by the false prophet of political myopia? Or instead shall we confront it, look directly at the generations of our future, and remark with paramount certainty that we shall not abandon the prospects of social mobility—that we shall not commit our education to oblivion—and that we will never fall by the sword of economic stagnation? To balance the state budget is undoubtedly glorious, but it will never justify the evacuation of our educational promises to the engines of ruination.

[1] The Universal Pre-K Bandwagon, *The Phi Delta Kappan*, Vol. 87, No. 3, 2005.

[2] Susan Prentice, High Stakes: The “Investable” Child and the Economic Reframing of Childcare, *Signs*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 2009.

[3] Eric A. Hanushek and Steven G. Rivkin, Pay, Working Conditions, and Teacher Quality, *The Future of Children*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2007.

[4] Barnett Berry and Patrick M. Shields, Solving the Teacher Shortage: Revisiting the Lessons We've Learned, *The Phi Delta Kappan*, Vol. 98, No. 8, 2017.

[5] Raj Chetty, John N. Friedman, and Jonah E. Rockoff, Measuring the Impacts of Teachers II: Teacher Value-Added and Student Outcomes in Adulthood, *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 104, No. 9, 2014.

[6] Bruno V. Manno, An Opportunity Framework for Career Pathway Programs, *The Phi Delta Kappan*, Vol. 102, No. 5, 2021.

[7] Victor M. Hernandez-Gantes and Edward C. Fletcher, The High School Career Academy as a Model for Promoting Technological Preparation: Promising Practices and Challenges in the United States, *Vocational Education and Training in the Age of Digitization: Challenges and Opportunities*, 2020.