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Senate Bill 852 - Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Alterations

The Honorable Brian Feldman
The Honorable Cheryl Kagan
Education, Energy, & Environment Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and distinguished members of the Committee,

After three years of implementation, we can celebrate early successes, but it is clear that adjustments are needed. The challenges we face require pragmatic solutions to ensure both the sustainability of the Blueprint, the fiscal health of the State, the most importantly, the academic success of our students. This list of recommendations is based on the combined experience of those tasked with implementing the Blueprint for Maryland at the school level: administrators, teachers, and members of boards of education. Together, these recommendations will address implementation challenges, save the State and Local Education Authorities money, and increase local schools' flexibility.

- SB0852 will save Maryland money by reducing the State's share of salary increases for prospective, not current, employees who receive and maintain National Board Certification (NBC). The current state shares are \$8,000; \$7,000; and \$6,000. Under my bill, the State burden would be reduced to \$4,000; \$4,000; and \$3,000 **saving Maryland approximately \$11,000 per NBC teacher per year.**
- This bill will remove Principals and Assistant Principals from the Blueprint Career Ladder. Declassifying Principals as "teachers" would exempt them from teaching time and National Board Certification (NBC) requirements, which are not appropriate benchmarks for their roles. By exempting them from NBC requirements, SB0852 will further reduce the burden on the State. This

adjustment also aligns with the established bargaining structures in school systems, where teachers and administrators are represented by separate units.

- Current statute requires LEAs to report on how funds are spent in eight categories in order to ensure 75% of Foundations funding is following the individual student. LEAs separately file detailed monthly accounting reports with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

SB0852 will allow individual schools to combine the eight categories into an aggregate report to reduce administrative costs and burdens. Aggregate reporting will additionally assist schools by providing flexibility to respond to changes in student demographics. Example: in year 1, a school has two English-language learners. By the time funding is allocated for those two students in year 2, they may have graduated.

- Foundation funding is insufficient to deliver all basic education needs for traditional students and operations of a school. This deficiency is exacerbated in small schools without significant ‘special-populations’ which receive additional funding. With limited budgets, small schools find it nearly impossible to offer the same academic programming and enrichments as larger, more-resourced schools. SB0852 will allow LEAs to request reporting requirement waivers for schools with 350 or fewer students. Waiving requirements will reduce compliance burdens on staff of smaller schools while providing additional flexibility to meet their specific needs.
- Income-eligibility guidelines for College and Career Readiness pathways —such as dual-enrollment, international baccalaureate programming, and career and technology education— will allow LEAs to save money. SB0852 will permit LEAs to develop the guidelines while simultaneously ensuring students that are eligible for free or reduced price lunches are exempt from income-eligibility guidelines.
- While the implementation of the Career Counseling and Readiness provision has been inconsistent, it is important to recognize there have been some successes. The revision in this bill will clarify that the program will continue indefinitely but that LEAs can opt to continue under current provisions or develop their own with the same oversight and reporting requirements. This will provide LEAs the flexibility and tools they need to ensure the funding is invested in our children in the most effective and efficient way possible.

- SB0852 directs MSDE to study how Foundations funding influences the achievement of students with disabilities. It will examine whether funding disbursements align with the needs of disabled students, whether a funding formula that uses multiple weights for special education services is feasible, and whether the cost of student transportation is appropriately reflected in the funding formula.
- Finally, SB0852 will clarify that multilingual learners and special education students are considered Tier 1 students. The Blueprint currently defines a Tier 1 student as a 3 or 4 year old who is homeless or whose family income is less than or equal to 300% of the federal poverty level. This bill will update that definition to include students who have a disability or from a home where English is not the primary spoken language. This is consistent with the intent of the Blueprint, which currently grants students with disabilities and multilingual learners the same prioritization as Tier 1 students, but includes them as separate categories. This technical update will streamline the bill's language and enshrine these students as worthy of the same consideration as current Tier 1 children.

These proposals will save our state money, save local school systems money, and give local administrators the flexibility they need to better implement the Blueprint for Maryland. I urge a **favorable** report.

Sincerely,



Senator Karen Lewis Young