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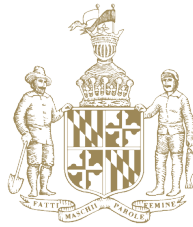
Government, Labor, and
Elections Committee

Subcommittees

Chair, Election Law

Local Government/Bi-County
Agencies and Administration

Chair, Maryland Legislative
LGBTQ+ Caucus



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SPONSOR TESTIMONY

HB 64 - Task Force on Education Funding and Student Population Growth

The Honorable Ben Barnes, Chair
Appropriations Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 131
Annapolis, MD 21401

Chair Barnes, Vice-Chair Kaiser, and Esteemed Members of the Appropriations Committee:

House Bill 64 creates a task force to study the State's current spending formula for Local School Systems (LSS). The Task Force will comprise members of the General Assembly, state agencies, teachers' organizations, and local education institutions to examine the challenges related to the timing of student enrollment counts and the related apportionment of state funds to LSS experiencing growing populations. My office has heard repeatedly from students, educators, and administrators that the current methodology for apportioning is not equitable—especially for growing systems. **This bill passed the Senate last year unanimously but did not advance in the House.**

Current Allocation Methods Leave Some Students Out: Currently, school funding is calculated on student enrollment counts conducted once a year, with additional funding for specific demographic enrollments, such as students experiencing poverty or who need special education supports. The formula uses actual enrollment counts conducted in the fall of the prior fiscal year. For growing jurisdictions, this timing leads to perpetual underfunding. By studying the effect of delayed enrollment counts, the Task Force will provide insights and recommendations for the funding formula.

Schools Need the Right Resources to Support Their Students: Underfunding due to inaccurate student counts creates significant difficulties for appropriate school staffing and ancillary resources, leading to lower-quality services for all students. Schools with growing populations often face cash flow issues due to the undercount and then must rely on county and local reserve funds until state funding is received. The challenge is compounded when intersected with English as a Second Language (ESL) and special needs education.

There is a Precedent for Updating the Formula—Especially to Deliver for our Students: The current formula has been amended previously to account for student enrollment decline—but critically, not for student enrollment growth. Insights from the Task Force’s report will enable the General Assembly to improve the funding formula, so we meet the current and future needs of LSS regardless of their population trends.

The Task Force will examine the connection between growing student populations and the necessary funding and make recommendations for improving the allocation of school funds. By establishing a Task Force to study these issues, House Bill 64 will guide careful thought and consideration to ensure that funding is equitably distributed; students are appropriately supported, and school systems can thrive across the state.

For these reasons, I urge your support for House Bill 64 and respectfully request a favorable report.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kris Fair". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Delegate Kris Fair
District 3, Frederick County