
**Testimony in Support of House Bill 1300/Senate Bill 1000
Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Implementation**

**House Appropriation Committee
House Ways and Means Committee
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee**

**February 17, 2020
12:00 PM**

The Maryland State Education Association strongly supports House Bill 1300/Senate Bill 1000, the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Working from the report of the Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (Kirwan Commission), this bill implements a new funding formula and major policy reforms to deliver world-class schools for every student and community in the state regardless of zip code. It builds on the Blueprint passed last year and represents the critical policy elements necessary to finally address the chronic underfunding of our public schools and close equity and opportunity gaps faced by too many students. While revenue enhancements are not specifically linked in the bill, we stand ready to support the General Assembly in identifying new and existing revenue sources to fund this legislation and allow for the full phase-in of the implementation on schedule.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our 896,837 students for careers and jobs of the future. 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).

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future takes the best educational strategies in the world and applies them to our neighborhood public schools throughout Maryland. It will make Maryland a national leader in education and economic development by giving the next generation of Maryland students the skills, individualized support, and resources to be successful in the classroom and in winning the jobs of the future. The stronger accountability and improved efficiency of spending will ensure that taxpayers can trust that this needed investment in our schools will be wisely spent. Over the next 10 years, the Blueprint calls for billions of dollars of new investment in Maryland schools that would expand career and technical education programs, community schools, and pre-k; provide more resources for students from backgrounds of poverty and students with special needs; increase educator pay; hire more educators; create a new and rigorous accountability system; and a number of other research-backed strategies for improving schools.

The multi-year process that has resulted in this bill has moved from the 30,000-foot conceptual level, to broad policy goals, and now to the bill language before you. Throughout each step in that process, some elements have gained specificity and nuance to ensure that they make sense not just in an abstract report, but in the unique context and variety of Maryland's local school systems. That is true in this final step as well and we believe several amendments need to be adopted to develop a timeline and implementation plan that has the best chance to be successful. Below, you will see a series of topic areas that we hope to discuss with the committees and other stakeholders in order to improve equity, provide clarity in the overlapping accountability and administrative provisions in the bill, and protect and enhance educator voice.



Topic Area 1 – Formula Adjustments

Whether through grant enhancements, adjustments to the guaranteed tax base, or some other calculation to account for taxing effort and capacity, we hope to make changes to the funding formula that would alleviate some new local costs and shift them to be covered by the state. While making any of these changes, it is important to hold county governments accountable for their share of school funding with improvements in the maintenance of effort provisions.

Topic Area 2 – Accountability and Implementation Board

The interactions between the Accountability and Implementation Board, State Board of Education, expert review teams, county governments, local boards of education, exclusive bargaining representatives, and other state and local entities and stakeholders would benefit from additional clarity in the bill. We hope throughout these layers of accountability that educators and school-based leaders will have a strong and protected voice to develop and implement the plans necessary to faithfully implement the goals and recommendations of this legislation.

Topic Area 3 – Certification and Licensure

The current State Board of Education has been advancing policy initiatives related to teacher licensure that are plainly at odds with the recommendations of the Kirwan Commission. Considering this reality, it is important to make adjustments in this legislation that puts guardrails around the State Board's authority to contradict the Commission's work while holding consistently high standards for all educators in the state, whether they are prepared at a Maryland institution of higher education, at an institution of higher education from a different state, or through an alternative preparation program.

Topic Area 4 – Staffing, Salaries, and Career Ladders

Subtitle 10, relating to a career ladder for educators, runs counter to current law related to salaries being a mandatory subject of bargaining and, in general, is unnecessarily prescriptive. Changes should be made to allow for the collective bargaining process to develop a system that fits the unique needs, priorities, and capacities of each local school system so that it can be implemented successfully. So many of the policy goals are, rightfully, linked to having sufficient levels of staff in place to support individualized instruction and interventions. Yet at a time when Maryland is already facing a major teacher shortage, we need to make changes to ensure that the salary incentives and pipeline for recruiting and retaining teachers are aligned to meet the needs and goals of this legislation.

Maryland has great schools throughout the state. But right now, in too many places in our state, students don't have the same access to a great education. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future is our once-in-a-generation opportunity to bring real and lasting educational equity for every community and every student in Maryland. **MSEA respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 1300 and Senate Bill 1000 and we ask that you continue to work with educators throughout the committee and amendment process in both chambers.**