

MSEA Statement on Release of Blueprint for Maryland's Future Legislation

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Annapolis, MD - February 8, 2020 - "This is it: our once-in-a-generation chance to fundamentally improve our public schools and make sure that every student in every neighborhood has the opportunities, support, and attention that they deserve. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future will lead to expanding career and technical education, hiring more educators and increasing their pay, providing additional support to struggling learners, and creating lasting educational equity and a more prosperous future for Maryland. Our kids can't wait for the adequate and equitable school funding that they deserve—we must pass a new funding formula during the 2020 legislative session. Educators look forward to working with legislators to pass an equitable and sustainable formula that works for all students," said Baltimore County elementary school teacher and MSEA President Cheryl Bost.

BACKGROUND

The Kirwan Commission has been meeting since 2016 to revise Maryland's school funding formula, which was last updated in 2002. At one of the commission's first meetings, they heard an independent analysis overseen by the Maryland State Department of Education demonstrating that Maryland's public schools were underfunded by \$2.9 billion annually as of 2015.

In the course of dozens of meetings over three years, the commission studied the steps that high-performing states and countries had taken to improve their schools and incorporated those reforms into the commission's recommendations. These recommendations include: expanding career and technical education programs, community schools, and pre-k; providing more resources for students from backgrounds of poverty and students with special needs; increasing teacher pay; hiring more educators; and a number of other research-backed strategies for improving schools. The recommendations also include a new, rigorous accountability system, including an independent oversight board of education policy experts that will help ensure that implementation goes according to plan and stays on schedule, as well as the development of expert review teams that would include teachers and help with the implementation of particular policies such as expanding career technical education programs.

During the 2019 legislative session, the General Assembly began to implement the recommendations of the commission through the overwhelming, bipartisan passage of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The bill added \$1.1 billion in new school funding over the next three years, including an average 1.5% increase in teacher salaries, funding to expand pre-k and community schools, additional resources for special education and mental health, expanded accountability through the creation of an inspector general, and more. The Blueprint was passed following the March for Our Schools, the largest rally Annapolis had seen in nearly a decade with more than 8,500 educators, parents, and students from across the state.

The 2020 Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation that will be considered during this legislative session would revise the state's public school funding formula for the first time in nearly two decades and fund the Kirwan recommendations outlined above.

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