

BILL: House Bill 114
TITLE: Education - Geographic Cost of Education - Requirement
POSITION: SUPPORT
DATE: February 5, 2014
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means Committee
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the State's local boards of education, supports House Bill 114, which would mandate State funding for the Bridge to Excellence Act's Geographic Cost of Education Index (GCEI).

MABE believes that the GCEI is an integral component of the "Thornton" Commission's recommendations and essential to achieving the Bridge to Excellence Act's mandate for adequate funding for all of Maryland's students. The "Thornton" Commission on Education Finance, Equity, and Excellence recommended in its final report that "education funding should be adjusted to reflect regional differences in the cost of education that are due to factors outside the control of the local jurisdictions."

Therefore, the Bridge to Excellence Act included a Geographic Cost of Education Index (GCEI) funding component to provide additional State education aid to certain "high cost" jurisdictions. The GCEI developed for Maryland is composed of a personnel cost index (PCI) and a non-wage index (NWI) that assign dollar "weights" to teacher specific and location specific factors and account for differences in the costs of procuring non-personnel supplies, other than capital expenditures, such as paper products and energy.

Unfortunately, despite the adoption of the GCEI distribution formula in statute in 2004, no funding for the GCEI was included State Budgets for many years, and funding has remained discretionary. MABE greatly appreciates the full funding for GCEI provided since 2010, but also notes the struggle to restore GCEI funding during the 2012 Special Session; a challenge that would have been avoided if GCEI had been a mandatory component of Maryland's public school finance system.

For these reasons, MABE requests that the committee issue a favorable report on House Bill 114.