

BILL: House Bill 999
TITLE: Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education
POSITION: SUPPORT
DATE: March 3, 2016
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means Committee
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the state's twenty-four local boards of education, supports House Bill 999.

MABE strongly supports establishing a legislative commission to begin the process of translating the work of the ongoing adequacy studies and consultants' recommendations into legislative proposals for comprehensive education funding reforms.

The goal is to convene legislative leaders and education, business, and local government stakeholders to craft legislation to ensure the long-term adequacy and equity of funding for students in public schools statewide. MABE believes that establishing a commission in 2016 is essential to provide ample time to appoint members and brief them on the substantial studies and reports already issued by the consultants, and presented to a stakeholders group. The consultants' adequacy and equity studies are to be completed by the close of 2016. Waiting until 2017 to form a commission would unnecessarily delay the development of legislative recommendations for an additional year.

The new commission would review the current education financing formulas and accountability measures and make recommendations to update and enhance the funding formulas established by the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002. Therefore, the proposed legislation is similar to the 1999 legislation which created the "Thornton" Commission and led to the passage of the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act.

The "Thornton" Commission was created by the same legislation that initiated the funding for the adequacy and equity studies, so that the work occurred in tandem. Today, the adequacy studies are already fully funded and well underway; and an informal stakeholders group is briefed by the consultants but has no charge to develop legislation, nor does it include legislators. MABE believes it is time for the General Assembly to establish the forum for deliberating and deciding on legislative proposals to chart the course of education finance for the future.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 999.