

Maryland Board Members Turn Out for Equity and Advocacy Events

Equity Symposium

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) held its second Equity Symposium which provided a forum for school board members, public school advocates, and community leaders to examine and discuss the strategies, research, and best practices that are positively impacting the educational outcomes of academically and economically disadvantaged students in public schools.

Maryland school board members, school system staff, and MABE staff attended the day-long event which included keynote speakers Kati Haycock, CEO of the Education Trust, Leslie Fenwick, Dean Emerita at Howard University, and former Prince George's County board member and MABE president Verjeana M. Jacobs from VMJacobs Esq. and Associates. The agenda also included breakout sessions on a wide range of topics impacting equity in public schools.

Other sponsors of the event were the Caucus of American Indian/Alaska Native School Board (AIAN), Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE), National Black Council (NBC), and National Hispanic Council (NHC), is focusing on building the capacity, knowledge, and skills of school board members around issues of access, equity, and diversity in public education.

Photos of just a few of the many members in attendance:



*Top row L-R:
Carolyn Boston,
Mary Roche,
Segun Eubanks,
Raaheela Ahmed,
Steve Verch,
Alexander Wallace,
Beverly Anderson;
Alexander Wallace,
Joy Schaefer,
Chuck McDaniels, and
John Woolums*



*Bottom row L-R:
Maria Sasso,
Stacy Korbelak,
Teresa Milio Birge,
Carolyn Williams;
Anne Arundel student
board member
Carolyn Williams
addresses the audience.*

Advocacy Institute – Day on the Hill

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) held its annual Advocacy Institute in Washington, DC, January 29-31, with hundreds of board members from across the nation preparing to lobby their Representatives and Senators on federal education funding and policy issues.

Maryland school board members, representing MABE's Federal Relations Network Committee, included MABE President Joy Schaefer (Frederick), FRN Committee Chair Bob Lord (Carroll), Al Williamson (Harford), Julie Hummer (Anne Arundel), Jill Ortman-Fouse (Montgomery), Muriel Berkeley (Baltimore City), and Steve Verch (Baltimore County).

On Tuesday, January 31, board members went to the Hill to advocate for reauthorizations of the federal Child Nutrition Act and Perkins Career and Technology Education Act, increased funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and to discuss the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and transition under the new Trump Administration.



Top row, L-R: Muriel Berkeley, Joy Schaefer, Al Williamson, John Woolums, Bob Lord, Julie Hummer, Jill Ortman-Fouse, Rep. John Delaney; Al Williamson, Jill Ortman-Fouse, Rep. Jamie Raskin, Joy Schaefer, Bob Lord, Muriel Berkeley, John Woolums

Bottom row, L-R: Rep. Anthony Brown, Al Williamson, Julie Hummer; Muriel Berkeley, John Woolums, Bob Lord, Joy Schaefer, Sen. Chris Van Hollen, Al Williamson, Jill Ortman-Fouse

In a day-long series of meetings with members and staff, Maryland board members highlighted the following positions on pending federal legislation:

- Support for reauthorizing child nutrition programs in order to grant greater flexibility for school systems to administer school meal programs, including: flexibility in whole grain content and sodium reduction targets.
- Support for reauthorizing the Carl D. Perkins Career & Technical Education Act to provide the necessary support to school districts to ensure that students have access to high-quality career and technical education programs with a strong academic component and credentialing programs. A key priority is to increase funding to support the modernization of CTE programs.
- Support for sustained investments in foundational programs, such as Title I and IDEA, which benefit millions of our students. Increasing the federal share of funding for special education is paramount.
- Recognition that Maryland's school systems appreciate the role of public school choice, through high quality public charter schools, contract schools, magnet schools, and other programs. However, private school choice through vouchers or deregulated charter schools should not be funded or promoted by the federal government.

Justin Brower, Legislative Assistant for Congressman Dutch Ruppersberger, shared the Congressman's strong support for CTE, STEM and public education programs that prepare students for success, including the many opportunities in Maryland for a career in the military.

Tim Daniels, Legislative Director for Congressman Andy Harris, encouraged further discussions with MABE and local boards on both the Child Nutrition Act and Career Technology Education Act reauthorizations, especially in light of Congressman Harris' position on the House Committee on Appropriations. As a member of this key committee, he also sits on the subcommittees on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies; Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies; and Homeland Security.

Congressman John Delaney thanked board members for their commitment, and described his work with the youth development organization, Urban Alliance, which builds partnerships to provide work experiences through internships, mentorships and job training. As one board member stated, "You can't dream what you can't imagine."

Anna Killius, Legislative Assistant for Congressman John Sarbanes, shared the Congressman's strong support last Congress for the CTE reauthorization, the Strengthening Career and Technical Education Act, to help more Americans enter the workforce with the technical skills they need to compete and secure employment. This bill passed the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 405-5, before reaching the U.S. Senate where it stalled and was not acted on.

Marc Broady, Policy Advisor to Congressman Elijah Cummings, shared his experiences working in the Baltimore City School System and emphasized the Congressman's interest in more restorative practices being offered to address student behavior to reduce the suspension rate under the traditional discipline approach. Mr. Broady also voiced concern with the Trump Administration's stated intention to allocate as much \$20 billion for school choice programs such as charters and vouchers.

Rachel Snyder, Legislative Assistant for Congressman Steny Hoyer, spoke to the Congressman's longstanding focus on early education programs. Board members noted the successful Judith P. Hoyer Early Child Care and Family Education Centers, known as Judy Centers; and Maryland's continuing efforts to expand and fully fund prekindergarten and early learning programs.

Congressman Jamie Raskin spoke to the challenges arising in the early days of the new Administration, especially in light of his expertise in Constitutional Law; and shared his strong support for the education priorities board members addressed.

Congressman Anthony Brown thanked board members for their service and pledged his support for public education and the priorities being advocated. The Congressman was a strong supporter of funding to expand prekindergarten and early education opportunities as Lt. Governor.

Senator Chris Van Hollen met with board members in his transitional office as a newly elected Senator. Board members thanked him for his stalwart support for public education; and efforts such as sponsoring legislation to fully fund the federal share of costs associated with implementing IDEA.

At the end of the Day on the Hill, board members had advocated strenuously for key legislative priorities and learned much more about the perspectives of the State's representatives on Capitol Hill. MABE looks forward to return visits following the legislative session in Annapolis.