



STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

LARRY HOGAN
GOVERNOR

September 12, 2017

Andy Smarick
President, Maryland State Board of Education
208 Columbia Lane
Stevensville, MD 21666

Dear Board President Smarick:

I have reviewed the Maryland Consolidated State Plan (State Plan) created by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) in accordance with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). I commend you and the members of State Board of Education (Board) for your hard work and dedication to the State Plan. I know that members of the Board made it a priority to participate in listening tours across the state to hear feedback from students, parents, and educators; and to work with stakeholder groups and advocates to gather input on how to best craft a State Plan designed to close achievement gaps and promote strong student performance.

As you know, ESSA was signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015. This bipartisan measure reauthorizes the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the federal education law that reflects this country's longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students. Under ESSA, Maryland was given the opportunity to effect significant improvements in our education system. I wrote to you in November, February, and August stressing the importance of creating a plan that is driven by accountability and prioritizes better academic outcomes for Maryland students.

Unfortunately, due to the decision of the Maryland General Assembly to overturn my veto of the misleadingly-titled "Protect Our Schools Act" (Chapter 29 of the Acts of 2017) I cannot in good conscience sign the State Plan. I strongly believe that this misguided legislation dramatically limited the ability of the Board to include the type of educational reforms anticipated by ESSA, and therefore, I do not believe it represents enough of a positive step forward for Maryland students.

Chapter 29 stymies any attempt to hold schools accountable for student performance and includes provisions aimed at preserving the status quo in failing schools. It identifies no

evidence-based intervention strategies to address our lowest performing schools. Because your hands are tied, Maryland is missing out on the opportunity ESSA gives us to move beyond outdated processes and procedures and toward evidence-based, innovative strategies that are producing successful results across the country.

I trust that the State Board of Education will continue to develop and implement innovative approaches that will provide an exceptional education for all Maryland's students regardless of where they happen to live.

Again, I appreciate your diligent efforts to craft a State Plan to improve education in Maryland to the extent possible under the law, and I know many of you share in my regret that the law adopted by the General Assembly did not allow the type of innovation and reform we had hoped for.

Thank you for your continued service to the children of Maryland.

Sincerely,



Larry Hogan
Governor

cc: Betsy DeVos, United States Secretary of Education
Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Matthew Clark, Chief of Staff
Karen Salmon, State Superintendent of Schools