

October 19, 2017

MABE Legislative Committee Welcomes Kirwan Commission Chair

On October 16, 2017, MABE's Legislative Committee was pleased to have the benefit of Dr. Brit Kirwan's presentation on the work of the "Kirwan" Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education, and the opportunity to engage in a very informative question and answer session with Dr. Kirwan and Rachel Hise, Principal Policy Analyst at Maryland Department of Legislative Services. Stacy Korbela, MABE's Legislative Committee Chair, introduced Dr. Kirwan and Ms. Hise to full house of board members and staff from across the state.

Dr. Kirwan presented an overview of the Commission's mission to review and recommend changes to the current school funding formulas, and to develop policies and strategies to enable Maryland's students to perform at or above the level of the highest performing nations and states. He opened by recognizing and praising the leadership and contributions of Joy Schaefer as MABE's representative on the Commission.

In his presentation, Dr. Kirwan highlighted the funding adequacy study conducted by Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (APA), which recommends a nearly \$2 billion increase in state funding and nearly \$1 billion increase in local funding, and the Commission's policy work focusing on the [9 Building Blocks](#) for a World-Class Education System developed by the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE). Dr. Kirwan noted that although Maryland has the highest household income in the nation, the level of investment in education is 14th, and 5% less is being spent in schools serving low-income students than in wealthier communities (resulting in a national equity ranking of 41st). In this context, he emphasized strong support for expanding access to high quality early education by providing full-day prekindergarten (likely with a sliding fee scale for wealthier parents), and full-day PreK for low-income three-year olds. Other reforms likely to be recommended include major changes in Maryland's teacher education programs, and expansion and improvements in career technology education.

Dr. Kirwan also alerted MABE to the Commission's insistence that additional funding is coupled with a strong system of accountability. He pointed to Maryland's mediocre performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). He described the recommendation to move the required college and career readiness assessment from 11th grade to 10th grade, and the expanded use of PISA as a measure of international competitiveness.

Board members raised questions concerning the need for a school facility funding aligned with the expansion of prekindergarten, the role of local funding in achieving funding adequacy, the role of social services and public health safety nets in strengthening public education in other nations, and better aligning the state's educational and economic development priorities. To the question of how to implement funding equity, Dr. Kirwan responded that state funding could be provided by formula for schools serving low-income students.

Dr. Kirwan stressed that he recognizes local control is very important, but that local plans must be reviewed by somebody to ensure faithful implementation. He referred to this balance as the grand bargain, and reiterated the need for concessions in order to adopt a new paradigm based on proven practices so that Maryland's students can compete in a global economy.

The [Meeting Agenda and Materials](#), including [Dr. Kirwan's Presentation](#), are available on MABE's [Legislative Committee webpage](#).

For more information on this or other legislative issues, please contact John Woolums, Director of Governmental Relations, jwoolums@mabe.org.