

BILL: Senate Bill 1092
TITLE: Education - Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education
DATE: March 7, 2018
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Budget and Taxation Committee
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the state's local boards of education, supports Senate Bill 1092, which includes several recommendations of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education.

MABE supports this legislation in order to support meaningful initiatives related to the larger work of the Commission. The bill is needed to allow the Commission to remain actively engaged in developing final recommendations, through the complex task of aligning education reforms with funding proposals. As a precursor to comprehensive reforms and enhancements to Maryland's public school finance system, this bill would establish a comprehensive teacher recruitment and outreach program; a K-8 literacy grant program; a learning in extended academic programs grant program; and career and technology education innovation grant program. In addition, the bill would ensure funding for current prekindergarten grant programs and the teaching fellows for Maryland scholarship program.

As the General Assembly considers and enacts this bill, the Commission is continuing its work to develop final recommendations for updating and enhancing Maryland's public school finance system. MABE is participating fully in this work, and supports the thrust of significantly increasing the State's investment in a high performing and innovative statewide system of public schools toward the goal of improving our schools so that our students are as well prepared as students educated in the highest performing school systems in the world.

MABE led the advocacy effort to create the Commission precisely so that an updated adequacy study and other funding and accountability issues could be debated and transformed into legislation to update and improve Maryland's school finance system. Senate Bill 1092 represents a significant step in this direction.

Local boards believe that Maryland can and should move forward by adopting meaningful changes to our current school finance system, a system we can all be proud of, but which now dates back to 2002. Specifically, MABE is supporting comprehensive recommendations to enhance our school finance system by increasing the base amount of funding for all students, sustaining the additional "weighted" per pupil funding for our students learning English, and students living in poverty, and increasing the weighted funding amount for students receiving special education services. In addition, MABE strongly supports a per pupil funding approach to supporting current, and expanded, prekindergarten programs.

MABE is confident that through incremental implementation of funding recommendations developed by the Commission and enacted by the General Assembly, Maryland can renew its commitment to fulfilling its constitutional mandate to fully fund and support an excellent education for all students. MABE believes that significant funding increases are needed to support equitable access for all students to an excellent education. MABE also believes that local boards must be at the helm, fulfilling the responsibility to govern school systems in the best interests of all students. This legislation is consistent with the principle of adequately funding educational programs and preserving the role of local board governance. MABE looks forward to supporting the Commission's final recommendations as aligned with these same principles.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 1092.