

Eliminating Achievement Gaps for All Students

(Adopted 1998; amended 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2012, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018)

WHEREAS, boards of education in the State of Maryland are uncompromisingly committed to the academic success of all students; and

WHEREAS, significant numbers of students, and groups of students, demonstrate wide achievement gaps on state assessments relative to the performance of other groups of students; and

WHEREAS, in 2001 the State Board of Education adopted the goal of eliminating the achievement disparity between minority and majority students within five years; and

WHEREAS, the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002 mandated five-year comprehensive master plans which must include specific strategies that will be used to accelerate the achievement of all students, including students failing to meet state and local academic content and achievement standards, and including strategies that focus on eliminating achievement gaps among legally defined groups of the student population; and

WHEREAS, the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) imposed strict performance accountability measures for schools, school systems, and the state based on the achievement of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) toward the goal of 100 percent of all students demonstrating proficiency in reading and mathematics by the 2013-2014 school year; and

WHEREAS, NCLB resulted in significant changes to Maryland's student assessment program, including the administration of Maryland School Assessments (MSAs) in reading and mathematics in grades 3 through 8, and grade 10; and three NCLB-mandated High School Assessments (HSAs) in English, Algebra/Data Analysis, Biology; and

WHEREAS, Maryland has adopted College and Career Readiness Standards and state assessments developed in conjunction with the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC); and

WHEREAS, NCLB has been replaced by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which continues to require grade level state assessments in math and reading/language arts in grades three through eight, and once in grades nine through 12; and science assessments at least once in grades three through five, grades six through nine, and grades 10 through 12; and

WHEREAS, the MSAs have been replaced by PARCC assessments, and federal and state mandated high school assessments include PARCC Algebra 1, PARCC English 10, Government, and the Maryland Integrated Science Assessment (MISA); and

WHEREAS, ESSA requires disaggregated data collection and public reporting by local school systems and states of student assessment results for all students and groups of students based on race, ethnicity, gender, disability status, English proficiency, homeless status, foster care status, migrant status, and status as economically disadvantaged; and

WHEREAS, disaggregated student assessment results on state assessments for African American, Hispanic, limited English proficient (LEP), economically disadvantaged (based on Free and Reduced Price Meal eligibility), and special education students reveal significant achievement gaps in reading and mathematics and high percentages of these students not achieving the adopted passing scores; and

WHEREAS, in 2017, African American students comprised 34 percent of the public school student population; Hispanic students constitute a growing percentage of the public school student population (from less than 3 percent in the early 1990s to more than 17 percent, in 2017); the percentage of students eligible for Free and Reduced Price Meals has increased to more than 45 percent; LEP students constitute more than 10 percent of the public elementary school student population; and students receiving special education services have consistently constituted more than 10 percent of the public school student population; and

WHEREAS, Maryland enacted the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002 to enhance state funding for public education by adopting higher per pupil funding amounts for all students, and significantly higher per pupil amounts for limited English proficient, economically disadvantaged, and special education students; and

WHEREAS, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), enacted in 2015 as the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), reduces the scope of federally mandated reporting requirements, standards, and sanctions relating to student achievement; and

WHEREAS, ESSA eliminates AYP and proficiency requirements in favor of a state determined accountability system which must include the following components: improved student performance on state assessments, graduation rates, and English learner proficiency; and

WHEREAS, ESSA requires each state to set statewide, long-term goals and interim progress targets for improving outcomes for all students and student groups, including economically disadvantaged students, students from major ethnic and racial groups as defined by ESSA, children with disabilities, and English learners; and

WHEREAS, ESSA requires the identification of: (1) schools for comprehensive support and improvement and (2) schools in which any subgroup of students, on its own, would place the school among the lowest-performing five percent of all schools receiving Title I, Part A funds and that must implement targeted support and improvement plans; and

WHEREAS, Maryland's Consolidated State Plan to implement ESSA includes the goal to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education and to close achievement gaps between children meeting the challenging State academic standards and those children who are not meeting such standards;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that a top priority for local boards of education continues to be eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps among ALL legally defined groups of students, with continuing emphasis on the gap between white students and students of African American and Hispanic heritage while also focusing on excellence for all students; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) commends all groups and individuals who have demonstrated leadership in addressing the underachievement of all students and groups of students; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that MABE pledges to work with the State Board of Education, superintendents, and local boards of education to identify causes of and to implement solutions to the achievement gaps indicated by state and local assessment results.