

January 11, 2023

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**Legislative Committee Meeting**

MABE’s Legislative Committee met on Monday, January 9 to discuss MABE’s legislative priorities in 2023 and the transitions for newly elected members of the legislature, new committee leadership assignments, and the incoming Moore Administration. The committee also considered MABE leadership’s recent letter to Governor-Elect Moore raising several Blueprint implementation and funding issues, and a joint letter on the Time to Care Act’s new employee leave benefits program.

The [Legislative Committee](#) is led by Karen Yoho, Chair, and Brenda Wolff, Vice Chair, and includes representatives from all 24 Maryland boards of education. The committee guides MABE’s lobbying activities in Annapolis, and invites policy and legislative leaders as guest speakers to exchange ideas. During the legislative session, MABE’s bill testimony reflects the association’s resolutions as annually updated and adopted by the full membership, and legislative priorities and positions as adopted by the Legislative Committee.

**MABE's 2023 Legislative Priorities**

**MABE’s top priorities for the 2023 Legislative Session include:**

**Support for governance authority for local boards of education to adopt education policies and school system budgets reflecting local priorities and resources.**

- MABE supports broad discretion for local board decision-making authority in exercising legislative, judicial, and executive functions in accord with state and federal law and principles of equity and excellence for all students. Specifically, MABE advocates that state and local initiatives not reduce local board governance or budgetary authority nor create unfunded mandates.

**Legislative Committee**

**2023 Meeting Calendar**

- Jan. 23, 2023
- Feb. 13, 2023
- March 6, 2023
- March 27, 2023
- April 24, 2023

MABE's Legislative Committee meetings are held virtually by Zoom on Monday mornings, 10:00 am to Noon, unless otherwise indicated. Meeting agendas and materials are posted on the [MABE website](#).

## **Support for full State funding for Maryland's outstanding public schools.**

- MABE supports annual state and local education budgets commensurate with the full costs of implementing new and enhanced statutory and regulatory requirements and expectations. Specifically, MABE advocates for sustained increases in state and local funding in FY 2024 and beyond to support the Blueprint for Maryland's Future law, to fulfill Maryland's constitutional duty to adopt and fund a school funding system that ensures equity and excellence in every school and college and career readiness for every student.

## **Support for increased State funding for school construction and renovation projects.**

- MABE supports annual state and local capital and operating budgets commensurate with the costs of designing, building, renovating, operating, and maintaining high-quality learning environments for each student in our 1,400 public schools. Specifically, MABE advocates for a state capital improvement program of at least \$450 million in addition to the Built to Learn program to expand Prekindergarten and Career and Technical Education school facilities called for by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, and to support other locally prioritized school facility needs.

## **Support for sustained and increased local government investments in education.**

- Funding from Maryland's 23 counties and Baltimore City plays a critical role in the success of public education programs, services, and facilities. Specifically, MABE advocates for state laws mandating investments of local property and income tax revenues in public education, including a strong "maintenance of effort" guarantee that local funding must be sustained and increased from year to year.

MABE's [Legislative Positions & Priorities for the 2023 Session](#) include additional information on these priorities and position statements on other major policy areas.

### **2023 Legislative Session**

Governor-Elect Wes Moore, House Speaker Adrienne Jones, and Senate President Bill Ferguson were interviewed by Bryan Sears at the *Daily Record's* annual event kicking off the first day of session. Education issues were not the focus of these interviews, but Speaker Jones did emphasize her commitment to fully funding the Blueprint, and President Ferguson called for expanded apprenticeship opportunities provided through local workforce development boards. Governor-Elect Moore spoke passionately to the need to address childhood poverty, describing past efforts as mere lip service. Overall, the interviews focused much more on transit funding, legislation to regulate legalized cannabis sales, and the Governor's pledge to restore during his term the estimated 6,500 vacant state agency staff positions.

### **Blueprint Implementation**

On January 3, 2023, MABE wrote a letter to Governor-Elect Moore on behalf of all twenty-four boards of education in the state asking for his consideration of several funding and policy issues relating to the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Issues surrounding several areas of the Blueprint

were discussed in the letter including full-day Prekindergarten (PreK) expansion, student behavioral health, college and career readiness, and local board governance. MABE requested support for “the development of a comprehensive state plan to address the operating and capital costs of fully implementing the Prekindergarten (PreK) expansion contained in the Blueprint.” Such a plan would help both public and private PreK programs meet rising quality standards as well as standards for having adequate classroom space. MABE also requested “substantially increased school construction funding in the FY 2024 capital budget, and beyond, for public PreK projects.”

MABE recognizes that “the pandemic heightened public awareness regarding the severity of scope of the mental and behavioral health needs of students, and the lack of adequate professional staff to meet these needs.” Therefore, MABE urged consideration of future state investments in short and long-term solutions to providing the professional resources our students deserve. College and Career Readiness is also a prominent area of the Blueprint for MABE. The Blueprint includes clear mandates to provide guaranteed access to high quality college preparatory and career training programs for all students meeting academic standards. MABE is therefore requesting the alignment of state funding and the costs of program expansion to ensure equitable access for all students.

The letter also highlights MABE’s concerns related to education funding in the fiscal year (FY) 2024 State Budget. MABE “requests that state education aid in FY 2024 provide another year of hold harmless funding for school systems with decreasing enrollment.” Hold harmless funding would help to prevent the detrimental impact reduced enrollment would otherwise have on the mandated amount of state and local funding. In addition, inflationary cost increases are already impacting school system budgets, and will greatly impact the FY 2024 state budget and the effectiveness of funding for the Blueprint. MABE therefore urges for Governor-Elect to support a meaningful inflation adjustment to Blueprint funding through the implementation phase, and a mandated local funding adjustment to ensure adequate local investments essential to the Blueprint’s success.

MABE is pleased to be a leading voice in bringing awareness to these priority issues, and looks forward to an open line of communication with Governor-Elect Moore and his team during the 2023 session and his term.

For more information, see [MABE’s letter to Governor-Elect Moore](#).

## Time to Care Act Implementation

On December 20, 2022, MABE joined the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo), Maryland Municipal League (MML), and Public School Superintendent’s Association of Maryland (PSSAM) in a letter to the Secretary of the Maryland Department of Labor, Tiffany Robinson, on the Time to Care Act.

The joint letter was written expressing concerns for the planning and pending implementation of this new law, enacted in 2022, which establishes the Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) Program and FAMLI Fund to provide up to 12 weeks of benefits to a covered individual taking leave from employment due to specified personal and family circumstances. The weekly benefit is based on the individual’s average weekly wage, subject to a cap. The FAMLI Fund consists of contributions from employees and employers of at least 15 employees and pays for benefits, a

public education program, and implementation and administrative costs. The potential impact of this new program on local school system budgets is clearly significant.

MABE and other organizations representing local governments and school systems greatly value the goals of the Time to Care Act but are concerned about the effects of the implementation of such a program. MABE is particularly concerned about the difficulty the implementation of this act will have on local boards of education, which are fiscally dependent on additional state and local funding to support any newly imposed program costs.

The implementation of this new law requires that the Department of Labor submit their final recommendations for each establishment and operation of the statewide paid leave insurance fund by June 2023, and employer contributions are set to begin in October 2023 to be able to fund the benefit beginning in January 2025. Because of these requirements, many local governments will not know critical details of the law even as implementation is underway.

MABE and its sister organizations recognize that given the requirements of this law its implementation is not only “logistically challenging” but also “potentially impossible for local governments to navigate.” The implementation of the Time to Care Act would impose yet another unfunded burden on local school systems. It is because of this that MABE emphasizes that local boards of education may have to seek additional support from county governments. Included in the letter is a list of questions and requests posed by local governments and boards of educations to help address some of their concerns.

On behalf of the local school boards, MABE is pleased to be joining our local government partners in voicing concerns about the implementation of this law and advocating for answers to these timely questions. MABE looks forward to supporting legislation anticipated in 2023 to address specific implementation timing and other issues.

For more information, see [MABE’s letter to Maryland’s Secretary of Labor](#).

## Federal Appropriations Bill Education Highlights

MABE’s [Federal Advocacy Committee](#) met on Monday, January 9 to review the education funding components of the recently passed federal appropriations bill for 2023, and to prepare for the upcoming federal Advocacy Institute to be held January 29-31 in Washington, DC. The Federal Advocacy Committee is chaired by Diana Hawley (Cecil County) and meets throughout the year to discuss pending issues and coordinate meetings on Capitol Hill. The committee is comprised of board members appointed to represent the association in advocating the positions of MABE to Maryland’s federal delegation, including our two U.S. Senators and eight members of the U.S. House of Representatives. In addition, MABE representatives attend the annual Advocacy Institute in Washington D.C., and participate in “Day on the Hill” congressional office visits.

### **Congress Passes Major Federal Spending Package for 2023**

The U.S. Congress agreed in late December to pass the fiscal year (FY) 2023 federal appropriations bill, a \$1.7 trillion omnibus spending package supporting all federal operations and programs, including education funding under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Lawmakers in both chambers passed this

legislation on a bipartisan basis, with the House voting for passage 225-201 and the Senate voting in favor of the package by a margin of 68-29. Shortly after these votes, President Biden signed the package into law ([H.R. 2617](#)).

The new law provides a \$3.2 billion increase to the U.S. Department of Education's budget, an approximate 4 percent increase over FY22 funding levels. Of significant note for school systems, the omnibus spending package provides \$850 million in additional funding for ESSA Title I formula funds (a 4.8 percent increase); a \$903 million increase in state grants for special education under IDEA; \$100 million in additional funding for Title IV-A Student Support and Academic Enrichment grants (a total increase of 7.8 percent), as well as an array of other public education funding programs. Also included in the omnibus spending package is permanent funding for a comprehensive approach to summer meals for children.

MABE greatly appreciates the actions of Maryland's federal delegation in support of this critically important funding. MABE's advocacy team looks forward to working with Congress this year to secure additional investments in PreK-12 education as part of the upcoming FY24 federal budget and appropriations process.

For more information, see [MABE's Federal Advocacy Center](#).

## Bill Reports & Hearing Schedules

Throughout the 2023 legislative session MABE will provide an updated weekly Bill Report and Hearing Schedule containing MABE's positions and the status of all the bills we are tracking.

## Advocacy Resources

- [MABE's Annapolis Advocacy Center](#)
- [MABE's State Board Advocacy Center](#)
- [MABE's Federal Advocacy Center](#)

For more information, contact John R. Woolums, Esq., MABE's Director of Governmental Relations, at [jwoolums@mabe.org](mailto:jwoolums@mabe.org) or 410-841-5414.

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