

BILL: House Bill 1426
TITLE: Education – Blueprint for Maryland’s Future – Alterations
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
DATE: February 26, 2024
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports House Bill 1426, which would make several modifications to the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future law. MABE endorses the changes recommended by the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) and requests the consideration of additional changes to the Blueprint law to help ensure adequate local government and to secure both state and local funding to support the offices of the local Blueprint coordinators.

MABE agrees that the bill’s amendments to the Blueprint are needed to address a range of issues, especially the proposal to cover the costs of fees for certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) for more educators. Beyond the modest but meaningful amendments contained in House Bill 1426 as introduced, MABE requests support for several other fiscally modest but what MABE believes would be extraordinarily valuable amendments intended to help ensure the success of the Blueprint for all students in every local school system.

First and foremost, MABE is requesting an amendment to re-establish the Maintenance of Effort “escalator” to require increased local funding in certain jurisdictions. This amendment would restore a successful approach in place between 2012 and 2023 to require jurisdictions to increase local funding based on their level of education spending relative to their local wealth in comparison to other jurisdictions. Similarly, MABE believes that adding an inflation factor to Maintenance of Effort, based on precisely the same calculation that is applied to state funding for the Blueprint.

Secondly, MABE requests an amendment to require state and local government cost-sharing for the salaries and related costs of local Blueprint Implementation Coordinators. These professionals are responsible for coordinating with the AIB and MSDE, and developing local implementation plans and therefore critical to the success of the Blueprint.

As this committee knows, the Blueprint law is an enormous and multi-faceted set of education funding and policy reforms. At its core, the Blueprint mandates increases in State and local funding for public education that represent the full commitment Maryland must make to fully and equitably fund a world class public education for all of Maryland’s nearly 900,000 students. Unfortunately, not all county governments are either mandated or volunteering to step up to generate and invest increases in local funding to fulfill the promise of a robust combination of state and local funding. To be clear, many counties and Baltimore City are investing historically high and increasing amounts of revenues to support their school system’s transformative, comprehensive, and therefore quite costly Blueprint reforms.

The Kirwan Commission recommendations and key components of the Blueprint law, include:

- Ensuring high-quality early childhood education and care, including expanded full-day prekindergarten for low-income three and four year-olds;

- Elevating teachers and leaders through increased salaries and numbers of teachers, counselors and other staff, including a more diverse workforce;
- Creating a world-class instructional system of college and career readiness pathways, including career and technical education (CTE);
- Increasing per pupil funding for all students and targeting additional funding for students who need it most, including economically disadvantaged students, students receiving special education services, and English language learners;
- Providing comprehensive supports by targeting funding to schools serving high concentrations of students living in poverty to provide community schools which feature before-and after-school, summer academic programs, and student access to needed health and social services; and
- Ensuring excellence for all through enhanced oversight and accountability to ensure that the Commission's recommendations are successfully implemented and produce the desired results.

Again, MABE believes that the success of the Blueprint will continue to deserve the legislatures serious scrutiny and consideration of amendments to ensure full funding, at both the state and local levels, to guarantee an equitable funding opportunity for all school systems to make the Blueprint a success story in their local schools and communities and for each and every student.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 1426 with the amendments described above and provided with this testimony.

MABE Requested Amendment to Restore the Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Escalator and Adopt an MOE Inflation Factor:

Education Article, §5–235.

(a) (1) (i) Subject to subsection (o) of this section and beginning in fiscal year 2023, the county governing body shall levy and appropriate an annual tax sufficient to provide an amount of revenue for elementary and secondary public education purposes equal to the local share of major education aid as adjusted under § 5–239 of this subtitle **OR THE MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT AMOUNT REQUIRED UNDER SUBSECTION (A)(2) OF THIS SECTION, WHICHEVER IS GREATER.**

(ii) For the purposes of calculating the local share of major education aid and regardless of the source of the funds, all funds that a county board, including the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners, is authorized to expend for schools may be considered as levied by the county council, board of county commissioners, or the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore except for:

1. State appropriations;
2. Federal education aid payments; and
3. The amount of the expenditure authorized for debt service and capital outlay.

(2) **(I)** Subject to subsection (o) of this section [and except as provided in subsection (a–1) of this section], the county governing body shall appropriate local funds to the school operating budget in [an] **A MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT** amount no less than the product of the county’s enrollment count for the current fiscal year and the local appropriation on a per pupil basis for the prior fiscal year using enrollment count; **AND**

(II) BEGINNING IN FISCAL YEAR 2026 THE MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT AMOUNT DETERMINED UNDER THIS SECTION SHALL BE INCREASED BY NO LESS THAN THE INFLATION ADJUSTMENT AS DEFINED IN § 5–201 OF THIS ARTICLE.

(3) IN EACH FISCAL YEAR IF A COUNTY’S EDUCATION EFFORT, AS DEFINED IN § 5–239 OF THIS SUBTITLE, IS BELOW 100% OF THE STATEWIDE 5-YEAR MOVING AVERAGE OF EDUCATION EFFORT, THE REQUIRED MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT AMOUNT FOR THE COUNTY SHALL BE ADJUSTED BY INCREASING THE PER PUPIL AMOUNT BY THE LESSER OF: A. A COUNTY’S INCREASE IN THE LOCAL WEALTH PER PUPIL; B. THE STATEWIDE AVERAGE INCREASE IN LOCAL WEALTH PER PUPIL; OR C. 2.5%.

MABE Requested Amendment to Fully Fund the Offices of Local Blueprint Implementation Coordinators:

Education Article, §5–404.

(h) **(1)** For each of fiscal years 2022 through **2033** [2026], the governing body of a county and the local school system jointly shall appoint a single implementation coordinator responsible for the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future by all government units operating in the county.

(2) FOR EACH FISCAL YEAR THROUGH 2033, EACH COUNTY BOARD SHALL PROVIDE \$150,000 FOR THE SALARY, BENEFITS, AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION COORDINATOR APPOINTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION.

(3) FUNDING FOR THE SALARY, BENEFITS AND SUPPORT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION COORDINATOR PROVIDED BY THE COUNTY BOARD IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPH (2) OF THIS SUBSECTION SHALL BE PAID BY THE STATE AND THE COUNTY IN THE SAME PROPORTION AS THE FOUNDATION PROGRAM UNDER § 5–213 OF THIS TITLE.