



**TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, HEALTH & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**SB 965 Education – Blueprint for Maryland’s Future - Revisions**

**POSITION: Support with Amendments**

**BY: Lois Hybl and Richard Willson – Co-Presidents**

**Date: March 15, 2021**

The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) supported HB 1300/SB 1000 Blueprint for Maryland’s Future – Implementation and advocated vigorously for the override of the Governor’s veto of this very important legislation. Thus, we also support SB 965, Blueprint for Maryland’s Future – Revisions, albeit with some changes.

The proposed legislation makes technical adjustments to the funding phase-in and program implementation timelines that, for the most part, are realistic, equitable, and do not delay funding or implementation further. The bill adds new sections that direct the use of federal Covid relief funds to priorities we support and are targeted on areas to mitigate the learning loss and behavioral, mental health issues caused by the pandemic. It increases the per pupil foundation amount to include funds for technology.

Our priorities for legislation designed to accompany the veto override include ensuring equity, that funding formula increases are maintained, that implementation timelines are maintained and not unnecessarily delayed, and that students who experienced learning loss during the pandemic are supported. To address these priorities, we suggest the following changes.

- The bill decreases the foundation weight for the compensatory education (Sec 5-222), English Learners (Sec 5-224), and special education (Sec 5-244) . These should be restored to the original weights.
- The bill reduces the amount each local education agency (LEA) receives for personnel grants (Sec 5-223 2(c)(1)(1)). This should be restored to the original levels. Teachers are a valuable resource and should be compensated adequately, especially when asked to do more.

Another of our priorities was to clarify the one-year pause that is triggered when revenues drop below a certain amount. The bill adds some clarifying language (Sec 19), but does not specify that this is a one-year pause and not a permanent stoppage of funding. We urge the committee to make this change.

We support the guidance the bill provides on the use of federal Covid relief funds. These funds will help schools address learning loss and the social, emotional, and

behavioral mental health needs of students. There are also provisions to account for enrollment declines, so that LEAs and schools are not penalized by the loss of funding due to enrollment drops. However, we oppose provisions that expand the use of standardized testing. Besides the ambiguity around who will develop these assessments, students needing support do not need more testing. We urge the removal of these requirements.

The League urges the committee to give a favorable report to SB 965, with further revisions articulated above.