

Testimony in Support with Amendments to House Bill 1372/Senate Bill 965
Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Revisions
House Appropriation Committee
House Ways and Means Committee
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

March 15, 2021

The Maryland State Education Association supports with amendments House Bill 1372/Senate Bill 965. This bill provides technical amendments to the historic Blueprint for Maryland's Future. We believe these revisions will support the immediate implementation of the Blueprint, as well as adjusting the Blueprint to fit the growing needs of public education caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our 896,837 students for careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

The passage of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future makes Maryland a national leader in education and economic development by giving the next generation of Maryland students the skills, individualized support, and resources to be successful in the classroom and in winning the jobs of the future. Over the next 10 years, the Blueprint will invest billions of dollars of new investment in Maryland schools that would expand career and technical education programs, community schools, and pre-k; provide more resources for students from backgrounds of poverty and students with special needs; increase educator pay; hire more educators; create a new and rigorous accountability system; and a number of other research-backed strategies for improving schools.

The immeasurable adverse impacts of the coronavirus global pandemic present extraordinary challenges to public education in Maryland. Not only must we diagnose and remediate any academic gaps widened among our students during this extended period of quarantine and virtual learning, but we must also address the untold yet growing trauma, mental, and behavioral health-related challenges. Although the Blueprint was developed prior to the pandemic, it was built to address many of the inequities we see exacerbated by the pandemic. We respectfully ask that the following issues be taken into consideration for the purposes of amending this legislation.



PREVENT OUTSOURCING

The teachers, support staff, reading/math specialists, and any other professional working with students should be employed by the school district and assigned to the school where these services are being provided. This will mean better continuity for the students and the school staff the tutors would be working with throughout the school building.

MSEA recommends the following amendment:

- 5-226, page 10, line 19: after “professional” add **EMPLOYED BY THE SCHOOL DISTRICT**

SUMMER SCHOOL AND Transitional Supplemental Instruction PROGRAMS

Each county board of education, including Baltimore City, is required to establish and implement a summer school program for public school students to address the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on education. It is imperative that healthy learning and working conditions are considered, all staff involved in the program can receive additional compensation, and that such compensation is negotiated. It is also important that data is collected on race and FRPM eligibility in order to help identify and address inequities.

MSEA recommends the following amendments:

- Page 31, line 29, after “program” add **THAT MEETS HEALTH AND SAFETY STANDARDS AND ADHERES TO RESEARCH-BASED REMEDIATION AND DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE CLASS SIZE LIMITS.**
- Page 32, strikes lines 1-2 and replace with **(VI) MAY OFFER INCENTIVE COMPENSATION FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL, INCLUDING HIGHER PAY, LOAN FORGIVENESS, OR TUITION ASSISTANCE, THAT SHALL BE NEGOTIATED WITH THE EXCLUSIVE BARGAINING REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE IMPACTED SCHOOL STAFF;**
- Page 32, after line 16, add **(III) TAKES INTO ACCOUNT CLASS SIZE AND BUILDING CONDITIONS THAT ENSURE HEALTHY, SAFE, AND TEMPERATURE SUITABLE ENVIROMENT.**
- Page 32, after line 10, add **(XI) DATA BASED ON RACE AND FREE OR REDUCED MEALS ELIGLIBILITY.**
- Page 33, line 18, add **(6) DATA BASED ON RACE AND FREE OR REDUCED MEALS ELIGLIBILITY.**

IMPROVE LANGUAGE FOR SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORTS AND EXPAND BENEFIT TO SCHOOL STAFF

The emotional and mental health toll on school staff during the pandemic has been overwhelming, and additional federal funds for social-emotional supports should include assistance for both students and school employees. Addressing the emotional and mental health needs of school staff allows for educators to perform at the highest capacity for students. MSEA recommends the following amendments:

- Section 5, page 34, line 4: after “students” add **AND SCHOOL STAFF**
- Page 34, line 8, strikethrough “recognize signs of student trauma or behavioral health concerns” and replace with **IDENTIFY SYMPTOMS COMMONLY ASSOCIATED WITH TRAUMA AND USE EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE AND SCHOOL-WIDE APPROACHES TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS IN A CULTURALLY TRAUMA-SENSITIVE MANNER.**



PROVIDE GREATEST FLEXIBILITY FOR ASSESSMENTS

There is different language in the bill related to pre- and post- assessments linked to summer school and tutoring programs.

- In 5-226 (Page 10, line 23), they are called “standardized assessment”
- In Section 4 (Page 32, line 7), they are called “educational assessment”
- Also in Section 4 (Page 33, line 2), they are simply called “assessment”

MSEA’s priority is to have the most meaningful assessment that informs instruction as possible. This should not be a new state standardized assessment. It should not be something that takes a lot of time to administer and even more time to get the results back. Where possible, it should utilize assessments that teachers already use and have confidence in that inform instruction and/or assessments specifically created by classroom teachers.

To accomplish all of these issues, MSEA recommends the following amendments:

- Page 10, line 23, after “assessment” add **AS DEEMED APPROPRIATE BY THE LOCAL BOARD OF EDUCATION**
- Page 32, line 8 , after “assessment” add **AS DEEMED APPROPRIATE BY THE LOCAL BOARD OF EDUCATION.**
- Page 32 , after line 13-14, add **TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, THE ASSESSMENT RESULTS BE MADE AVAILABLE IN THE BEGINNING OF THE PROGRAM TO ASSIST IS PROGRAM PLANNING.**
- Page 33, line 2-3, after “assessment” add **AS DEEMED APPROPRIATE BY THE TEACHER.**

CONCENTRATION OF POVERTY PHASE-IN

The “eligibility year” distinction (page 8, lines 11-26) creates a delayed delivery of dollars for schools that qualify later in the phase-in for a per pupil CoP grant. MSEA recommends returning to fiscal years rather than years of eligibility, but maintain the higher percentages.

MSEA recommends the following amendment:

- Section 5-223, page 8, strike lines 11-26 and replace with:
 - (I) **FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023, 16%**
 - (II) **FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024, 32%**
 - (III) **FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025, 37%**
 - (IV) **FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026, 55%**
 - (V) **FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027, 66%**
 - (VI) **FOR FISCAL YEAR 2028, 75%; AND**
 - (VII) **FOR FISCAL YEAR 2029 AND EACH FISCAL YEAR THEREAFTER, 100%**

TRIGGER SHOULD BE A PAUSE BUTTON

If the BRE estimates are not met, the Blueprint funding should be paused until they are met again rather than indefinitely halted. MSEA proposes adding clarifying language that the growth of per pupil formula increases are limited to the rate of inflation just for the year where the December estimate is more than 7.5% below the March estimate.



To accomplish this, MSEA recommends the following amendments:

- Section 19, page 30, line 27, after “inflation” add **FOR THAT FISCAL YEAR**
- Delete “; and” at the end of line 27 and all of item (2) in lines 28-30.

We believe these amendments would strengthen the overall goal of adjusting the Blueprint to fit the moment, as well as ensuring that our students and educators have the supports they need in order to adequately respond to pandemic-related needs.

MSEA respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 1372 and Senate Bill 965, including the above-mentioned amendments, and we ask that you continue to work with educators throughout the committee and amendment process in both chambers.