



Maryland State Board of Education

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March 3, 2021

Delegate Anne R. Kaiser, Chair
House Ways and Means Committee
House Office Building, Room 131
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Kaiser,

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) appreciates the opportunity to submit this information to the House Ways and Means Committee for your consideration on House Bill (HB) 1278, Department of Legislative Services - Study - Capacity and Accountability of State Department of Education.

There are a number of very specific concerns that the State Board has in regard to different provisions of this legislation. While the Board does not fundamentally express opposition to the reporting requirements outlined in the bill, the timelines for reporting lay out some key operational difficulties for the Department and local school systems.

The reporting requirements in the bill on the allocation and expense of funding provided through the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act are set to begin in September of 2021, and sunset in May of 2022. However, the CRRSA federal stimulus package funds do not require that the funds be fully expended until 2023, and for the CARES Act until September 2022.

The reporting window likely would not present a full, and accurate, picture of how these funds are spent in total. Furthermore, the language in the bill identifies that "beginning on December 1, 2021, the Department of Legislative Services shall report to the Accountability and Implementation Board...on the implementation of this Act." It is unclear what the role of the Accountability and Implementation Board would be in the required reporting of the allocation of these funds. The State Board's role is not mentioned.

While the State Board agrees that ascertaining the effectiveness of the strategies utilized by the Department to mitigate learning loss and accelerate learning is critical as it relates to student outcomes, it is unlikely that reliable data will be available to conduct this kind of analysis in the timeframe specified.

While we are confident in the Department's *ability* to analyze learning loss outcomes for just the 2020-2021 school year, we are significantly less confident in the *accuracy* of that analysis as it would relate to the extremely condensed timelines identified in HB 1278. An analysis of the "accuracy of implementation of learning loss mitigation measures...including the identification of gaps in service" can be completed at any point in time.

However, this will require extensive data collection. It would also require observations, monitoring, interviews, and a significant dedication of additional staff and funding to complete the task.

The State Board is also eager to review data that gives us a snapshot of where our students are academically and emotionally, and what the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have been on every one of Maryland's nearly 900,000 students. However, we believe that artificially condensed timelines could provide an inaccurate or inconclusive picture of the situation.

We urge the committee to consider this information as you deliberate HB 1278. For more information, please contact Zachary Hands at 410-767-0504 or at zachary.hands1@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,



Clarence C. Crawford
President, Maryland State Board of Education

cc: Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D., State Superintendent of Schools
Zachary Hands