



To: Chair Kaiser and members of the Ways and Means Committee
From: Shanetta Martin, Education Policy Assistant Director, Advocates for Children and Youth
Re: HB1372/SB965: Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Revisions
Date: March 15, 2021
Position: Favorable Support

Supporting HB 1372 will further demonstrate a strong commitment to and investment in Maryland's economic future by ensuring that, regardless of zip code, all children and youth in our state will receive a high-quality public education. By supporting implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, public education in our state will be grounded in:

1. Greater access for families to early childhood education
2. High-quality and diverse teachers and leaders
3. Accessible college and career readiness pathways
4. Stronger governance and accountability processes
5. A range of resources that will support the social-emotional, physical, and academic success of all students

The opportunity could not have come at a better time. As for people all over the world, life has been disrupted for children in our state by the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact is far-reaching as students, their families, along with the entire academic community within public education have experienced the challenges of adjusting to almost a full year of online learning, food insecurity, economic instability, and for some – the pain of losing loved ones to the deadly disease. The time is now to lay the foundation that will not only strengthen the infrastructure that will develop robust learning and teaching opportunities for all students including those that are most vulnerable, but also to support addressing COVID-related impacts such as learning loss, the need to close the digital divide, additional wrap-around services to support the behavioral and mental health needs of students, along with resources that will ensure the safe return to school buildings.

In alignment with this HB 1372, we urge equitable distribution of Blueprint funds and careful consideration of the allocation of Concentration of Poverty Grants that will serve communities most in need. Particular populations to note include special education students, English Language Learners, and students from low-income communities. We also urge you to protect and preserve dollars set aside specifically for the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Fund in the future and continue to build the reserve so that the Blueprint will be fully and adequately funded through FY 26 where there is currently a shortfall in that final year.

We urge favorable support for HB1372. Thank you.