



The Maryland Education Coalition is dedicated to raising the academic achievement of students in Maryland public schools by promoting adequate funding and systemic accountability for improving results.

**Testimony before the House Ways & Means Committee
In Support of House Bill 215
Geographic Cost of Education – Requirement**

Board of Directors:

Rick Tyler, Co-Chair

Bebe Verdery, Co-Chair

Charlie Cooper, Secretary

Advocates for Children and Youth

American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland

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ABC Schools

Arts Education in Maryland Schools

Casa de Maryland

Maryland Out of School Time Network

Public Justice Center

**Presented by Bebe Verdery, Co-Chair
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The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) fights for adequate, equitable funding and systemic accountability because every child deserves a quality education and because achievement gaps must be closed.

House Bill 215 protects school funding and directly advances our mission and our current priorities by protecting the Geographic Cost of Education Index so that children in higher-cost jurisdictions have fair funding.

In the Thornton Commission process, the State very carefully considered the cost of providing an adequate education and closing achievement gaps; an index to adjust costs was always intended to be a part of the formula. Since the index did not exist at the time the Bridge to Excellence Act passed, by definition it had to be developed later, and thus it was not possible to include the index itself in the bill. House Bill 215 is designed to mandate the GCEI during the next several years while the education formula (including the GCEI) is being reexamined in the updated Adequacy Study.

Currently the State has fallen significantly behind in meeting the cost of an adequate education. One indicator of the gap is the extent to which Teacher-Student ratios have fallen. Using data from the MSDE Fact Books, we divided the number of instructional staff by Total Enrollment for the 2007-8 school year (before the Great Recession) with the same ratio for 2012-13, the last year for which we could obtain data. We found that the ratio of teachers to students fell by 3.9%. However, in the GCEI districts, the ratio fell by 4.5% whereas in the non-GCEI districts the drop was only 0.5%. This indicates to us that higher-cost jurisdictions are under considerable pressure and have difficulty maintaining adequate educational services.

Fairness requires that the State aid formula be adjusted for the true cost of education. That is why the Thornton Commission went to great pains to calculate the additional cost to educate an economically disadvantaged student or a student who needs to learn English. The additional cost of education in higher cost jurisdictions of the State is no less real than those child-related types of factors and should have no less recognition in the mandated formula.

Therefore, we request your favorable report on HB 215.



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	2007-8	2012-13		2007-8	2012-13		
	Instructional Staff	Instructional Staff	Percent Change	Total Enrollment		Percent Change	Change in Ratio
Allegany	998	903	-9.5	9,436	8,929	-5.4	-4.4
Anne Arundel	6,754	6,949	2.9	73,400	77,770	6.0	-2.9
Baltimore City	8,193	7,486	-8.6	81,284	84,747	4.3	-12.4
Baltimore	9,214	9,119	-1.0	104,283	106,927	2.5	-3.5
Calvert	1,599	1,448	-9.4	17,394	16,323	-6.2	-3.5
Caroline	527	557	5.7	5,658	5,585	-1.3	7.1
Carroll	2,534	2,477	-2.2	28,320	26,687	-5.8	3.7
Cecil	1,620	1,517	-6.4	16,290	15,634	-4.0	-2.4
Charles	2,454	2,449	-0.2	26,676	26,644	-0.1	-0.1
Dorchester	459	476	3.7	4,654	4,718	1.4	2.3
Frederick	3,654	3,879	6.2	40,487	40,456	-0.1	6.2
Garrett	453	383	-15.5	4,510	4,004	-11.2	-4.8
Harford	3,859	3,806	-1.4	39,172	37,868	-3.3	2.0
Howard	5,650	5,919	4.8	49,542	52,053	5.1	-0.3
Kent	245	211	-13.9	2,274	2,130	-6.3	-8.1
Montgomery	13,548	13,846	2.2	137,717	148,780	8.0	-5.4
Prince George's	11,469	9,885	-13.8	129,752	123,737	-4.6	-9.6
Queen Anne's	701	666	-5.0	7,808	7,752	-0.7	-4.3
Saint Mary's	1,435	1,483	3.3	16,890	17,453	3.3	0.0
Somerset	346	307	-11.3	2,910	2,943	1.1	-12.3
Talbot	369	399	8.1	4,396	4,570	4.0	4.0
Washington	1,964	2,002	1.9	21,703	22,403	3.2	-1.3
Wicomico	1,613	1,599	-0.9	14,399	14,489	0.6	-1.5
Worcester	883	866	-1.9	6,745	6,650	-1.4	-0.5
SEED School		46			386		
Total	80,541	78,678	-2.3	845,700	859,638	1.6	-3.9