



*Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY) is a statewide non-partisan non-profit focused on improving the lives and experiences of Maryland's children through policy change and program improvement. Our multi-issue platform helps us to improve the entirety of children's worlds—the systems they touch, the people they interact with, and the environment where they live.*

## **ACY'S EDUCATION FUNDING FORMULA PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COMMISSION ON INNOVATION AND EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION**

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The Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (Commission) is a monumental opportunity to direct the future of education for Maryland and consequently the future of our communities, businesses, and more. There are many important aspects of the funding formula, but ACY wants to ensure that certain elements are not overlooked in the final recommendations. We believe the following topics must be addressed in order to provide an adequate and equitable education to all of Maryland's children and ensure they have a strong foundation, services and supports, and programming to be successful in college and careers.

### **INCREASE BASE COST AND WEIGHTS**

The Commission must substantially increase the base per pupil foundation amount to meet the increased costs of education since the passage of the Bridge to Excellence in 2002. The weights for special populations must remain high enough to address the additional resources and services needed to educate students in Maryland schools.

### **ADDRESS CONCENTRATED POVERTY**

Application of the student adjustment weights must be nonlinear in order to address the effects of concentrated poverty. Under a nonlinear approach higher weights would be applied to districts with higher concentrations of poverty. There could be a separate weight for schools where the concentration of poverty has reached a threshold or an escalator could be applied. The funding recommendations must also support strategies, such as Community Schools, that are equipped to address the increased needs of students in schools with high concentrations of poverty.

### **EXPAND EARLY CHILDHOOD OPPORTUNITIES**

The Commission must ensure access to universal, high quality early childhood programming and prekindergarten for 4 year olds, as well as low income 3 year olds. These programs must provide both academic lessons, but also social and emotional learning and supports to prepare young children for kindergarten and beyond.

### **ADOPT AN EFFECTIVE POVERTY PROXY**

The Commission must select an appropriate "Poverty Proxy" that is both efficient and reliable. We recommend using Direct Certification with a multiplier (perhaps 1.6 as used in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) of the federal Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act). Using an alternative form, as proposed by the APA consultants, would undermine the intent of CEP to reduce the burden and stigma associated with forms. Direct Certification, however, counts those students already receiving services, while the multiplier acknowledges that there are other students who would qualify, but are not enrolled in those services.

### **USE MULTIPLICATIVE CALCULATION FOR LOCAL WEALTH**

The Commission should recommend the adoption of a multiplicative wealth measure. This would mean that the product of income and property values determines the local share, rather than the sum of personal property, real property, utility operating property and net taxable income as currently calculated and leads to unrealistic, inaccurate reflections of local wealth. Moving to the multiplicative approach will promote equity by calculating realistic state and local contribution targets that ensure all students receive the same funding across the state.

### **REJECT THE COMPARABLE WAGE INDEX**

The Commission should consider a geographic adjustment that will promote equity, which is not achieved with the Comparable Wage Index (CWI). The CWI will negatively impact jurisdictions where salary is not likely the most significant factor in teachers' location preferences, which often includes areas with high concentrations of poverty. These districts need additional funding to hire and retain quality teachers. While Geographic Cost of Education Index (GCEI) can be a more complex calculation, by incorporating multiple factors that affect teachers' decisions about where to teach, it is more likely to provide funding to districts that need the additional funds to attract and keep good teachers.

We understand that the Commission has much to consider as their work draws to a close in the coming months, but we hope that the Commission will take these recommendations into consideration when compiling their final report.