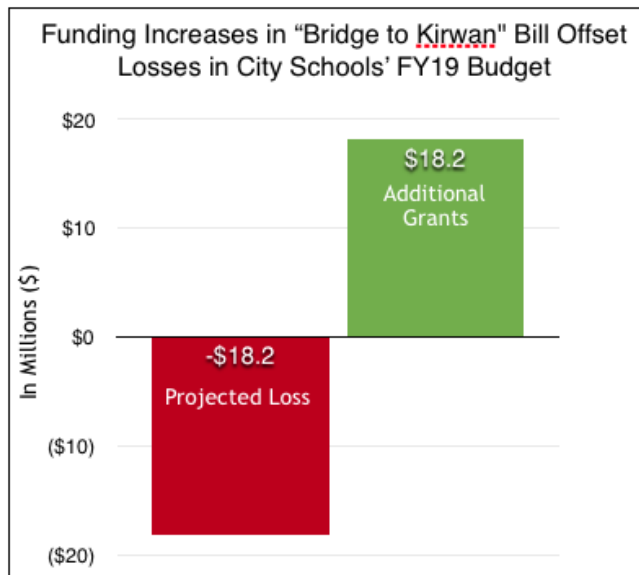


#FixTheGap Campaign Stabilizes State Funding to City Schools

Last year's vigorous campaign to #FixTheGap is paying off! The three-year "[Bridge to Kirwan](#)" legislation passed last year included a key provision not to allow any district's state funding to fall below the amount of the prior year. This means that for the upcoming school year, the Governor's proposed education budget for Baltimore City Public Schools and several other districts will provide the same funding as this year.

Without that bill, state funding to City Schools would have gone down by \$18 million for the upcoming year due to a drop in enrollment and an increase in the measured wealth of the City of Baltimore (when a jurisdiction's wealth goes up, state aid goes down). In a presentation to the City Delegation in Annapolis last Friday, CEO Dr. Santelises and COO Walker indicated that they would be able to balance the coming year's budget with the provided state aid. Dr. Santelises' announcement last year of a \$131 million budget deficit prompted the Baltimore Education Coalition's campaign to #FixTheGap. The City delegation pushed for the 3-year Bridge to Kirwan legislation, knowing the Kirwan Commission's work would not be completed in time to address City Schools' budget crisis. Underfunding of the original formula has deprived City Schools and other districts of hundreds of millions per year.



Dropping enrollment & increased City wealth would have led to a \$18.2 million loss in funding compared to the prior year. Bridge to Kirwan grants prevented that loss.

As parents and teachers know from prior years, however, flat state funding does not mean there isn't an impact on school or administration budgets. It just means that Baltimore (and several other counties) were "held harmless" from severe reductions in state funding. Since costs such as health care continue to rise, flat state funding is not sufficient to hold budgets stable; the local impact won't be known until City Schools puts out its budget.

Governor Funds Education Formula, Cuts \$19 Million in Other Important School Programs

As required by law, the Governor proposed a budget that provided per pupil funding for increased enrollment across the state, building in the required small (0.7%) inflationary increase. (Had the formula not been changed in 2007-08, the inflation increase would have been 2.2% this year.)

Governor Hogan did cut about \$19 m. in mandated education programs that fall outside the formula, including after-school and summer programs and college readiness grants. The legislature can attempt to restore those funds but would have to cut in other areas of the budget.

As a result of the "Bridge to Kirwan" bill, Governor Hogan was required to include \$15.2 million in "hold harmless" grants to five counties as well as to four school systems experiencing enrollment declines. The phase-in of pre-kindergarten grants to school systems providing full-day pre-kindergarten to all eligible four-year-olds continued to Baltimore City, Kent, and Somerset counties.

Additionally, the Governor proposes to increase voucher funding to private and religious schools from \$5.5 million to \$8.8 million. The ACLU opposes this funding, which reports show primarily benefit children already attending those schools.

[TAKE ACTION now to oppose public funding to private and religious schools.](#)


Kirwan Groups to Work with Consultants, Costing Out Proposals

Flat state funding at a time that schools face urgent needs makes the work of the "Kirwan" Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education even more important. The Commission's interim report is expected within days. The Commission will meet on Feb. 26 at 9:30 am (use this [link](#) to watch - click "Live" House Cmte/Appropriations) and will then break into five workgroups to further refine "consensus" items and work with consultants on costing out various options.

The ACLU will continue to work to influence the Kirwan Commission's recommendations toward adequacy and equity. Significant progress has been made in interim recommendations advising more support for schools with high numbers of children from low-income families and communities. Dr. Kirwan has indicated proposed final recommendations are likely by mid/late summer.

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