

# Priorities for the “Kirwan” Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education



Article VIII, Maryland State Constitution:

“The General Assembly...shall by law establish throughout the State a thorough and efficient System of Free Public Schools; and shall provide by taxation, or otherwise, for their maintenance.”

Maryland policymakers, through the “Kirwan” Commission, have the opportunity to fulfill this constitutional promise to our children.

Court rulings in the ACLU’s *Bradford v. MSBE* case to achieve a “thorough and efficient” education for Baltimore’s children led to proposals for a more adequate, equitable statewide education funding formula (“Thornton” Commission and 2002 Bridge to Excellence law).

Formula phase-in to 2008 was intended to provide sufficient funding to each school system in the state; however, the formula was cut back due to the recession. By FY2015, the “adequacy gap” shortfall for schools had risen to \$1.6 billion annually. Experts for the Commission in 2016 estimated an additional \$2.9 billion was needed.

## Full & Equitable Funding

Here are our priorities for a new funding formula to meet the needs of Maryland students.



### Equity

Ensure that each school system gets the funding its children need, with the state providing a sufficient amount needed in counties/City with lower wealth.

- Address racial equity throughout the formula and via other reforms to erase racial inequities in achievement.
- Ensure that the most experienced, qualified, and culturally competent teachers serve children needing the most help.



### Adequacy

Ensure the new state formula provides students with the level of resources they need to meet state standards.

- Increase the “base” amount for all children (including academic staff, tutoring, advanced programs, counselors, art, music, sports, etc).
- Increase resources and staffing for Black and Brown children, students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and those from low-income families.



### Concentrated Poverty

Increase staff and resources, such as additional academic staff, trauma-informed practices, social workers, to meet needs of children in concentrated poverty with substantial additional funding through an escalator according to the poverty level of the school.

### Community Schools

To address barriers to learning, provide wraparound services (health, mental health) and additional staffing, including a Community School Coordinator, for students and families.

### Afterschool and Summer School

Provide extended-day learning opportunities and year-round programs for students not meeting standards and those in higher poverty schools, including enrichments – art, music, sports, theatre, etc.

### Pre-K for all “at-risk” 3- and 4-year-olds

Provide full day pre-k funding for low-income 3- and 4-year-olds as the top priority, to be followed by expansion by family income for 4-year-olds.

### Facilities Support

Provide additional funding above the base to operate and maintain old and deficient school buildings. Add funding so that school system debt service payments on building improvements do not take money intended for the classroom.

### Measuring Poverty

A “proxy for poverty” using direct certification of family income with a 1.8 multiplier will be the closest match to the current Free & Reduced Meals count.

