

Ensure Adequate and Equitable Funding of Maryland's Public Schools

School Year 2022-23 is the first year of implementation for the State's new "sweeping" education reform bill known as the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future* ("Blueprint").

Over the next decade, the *Blueprint* law – if fully funded – was expected to provide an additional \$3.8 billion more for public schools in Maryland. Since 2019, the ACLU has been advocating for the legislature to provide an updated analysis of the *Blueprint* education funding as it relates to fulfilling the state's constitutional obligation to provide "adequate" funding for all public schools in Maryland.

Based on our analysis, the *Blueprint* education funding formula falls short of funding the law's programs and the standards adopted by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).



The state's latest report on funding adequacy shows that districts of low wealth are the most underfunded. These districts will have a harder time implementing the *Blueprint* plan. Further, fluctuations in inflation, the workforce, and overall economy are expected to trigger notable rises in projected costs in education in the near term.

Despite this challenge, there are some important legislative items to support during the legislative session that will help Maryland public schools take a big step forward in the overall goal of achieving excellent public schools.

SUPPORT: Governor's Education Budget for School Year 2023-24

For School Year 2023-24, the Governor's proposed budget includes \$784 million more for education over the previous year. This amount is \$390 million more than what was expected due to the addition of 110,000 students who meet the threshold for poverty. The increase was triggered by new data on the number of Marylanders that receive Medicaid, which the state is now using to count the number of children living in poverty.

In general, this new funding is part of the *Blueprint* phase-in, and most of it will be

directed towards programming for students from households with low income, students that receive special education, and students who are English Language Learners.

The Governor's budget includes:

- \$15 million for new teacher recruitment to fill 2,000 vacant teaching positions throughout the state, pending passage of the Maryland Educator Shortage Act.
- An additional \$500 million for the Blueprint for future years; however, more revenue will need to be secured to implement the full 10-year plan.
- \$1.1 billion in school construction funding in the budget for school renovations and new construction throughout the state. This amount is three times more than what is normally in the state budget for school infrastructure; mostly due to the passage of the \$2.2 billion Built to Learn Act in 2021.

SUPPORT: Neighborhood Indicators of Poverty (HB 1211)

The existing state education funding formula, codified in the *Blueprint* law, recognizes that students from households with low wealth experience more challenges to learning and generally require more funding for additional supports such as tutoring and wrap around services. However, the formula does not recognize the varying levels of poverty in communities that affect student outcomes.

This bill represents the recommendations of State Superintendent Mohammed Choudhury. The proposal adds layers

of nuance to the way the state directs education funding to students from households with low wealth and uses data at the neighborhood level to account for the varying levels of poverty in which children live. Students living in the most economically distressed areas are at the bottom in terms of outcomes and have the most to gain under this bill.

SUPPORT: Multilingualism is an Asset Bill (HB 1098/SB 882)

From the fall 2021 through 2022, the ACLU and the Community Workgroup on English Language Learners (WELL), our grassroots partners, provided a significant amount of input on this bill through extensive engagement with impacted individuals throughout the state and through an extensive review of reports on best practices to improve teaching and learning for English Language Learners in Maryland.

This bill seeks to add funding for English Language Learners to improve the overall capacity and quality of education and services at the school level and incentivizes school districts to establish dual language immersion schools in areas where there are large numbers of English Language Learners. Student educational outcomes for this population are low and this bill will go far in laying the foundation from which effective, evidence-based programs for this population can grow.

aclu-md.org/mdga23