

## Kirwan Commission Postpones Release of New Education Funding Formula

**Policy recommendations still due Dec. 31st but full formula re-write delayed until spring**



*Members of the Kirwan Commission listen to dozens of residents from Prince George's and surrounding counties on October 25th.*

Last week, the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education opened with a bang. After over a year of meetings and presentations, Brit Kirwan, the commission's chair, announced that they would not have final recommendations completed by December 2017. Kirwan and commission staff pointed to the complexity of the "never done before" work of aligning the "[9 Building Blocks for a World-Class Education System](#)" and the [APA study](#) to assign costs to the international standards and best practices that they are endeavoring to implement. Now, the plan is to have consensus on policy recommendations by December which would then be costed out

over the next several months for final recommendations with prices attached. This disappointing timeline change translates into more years of difficulty for all Maryland school districts, which face rising costs without sufficient increases in funding. This challenge is greater for low wealth, understaffed, and under-resourced districts like Allegheny, Dorchester, Baltimore City and Prince George's, which depend more heavily on state funding due to their limited local capacity.

The announcement was met with lively debate among Commissioners about clarity of mission, urgency, and how to separate policy decisions and cost determinations. Some insisted on tackling issues with strong support within the commission first to provide at least some relief to students and staff, while others were unsure if they had enough information to take even small steps forward.

The ACLU of Maryland will continue to advocate that the Commission adopt key policy priorities that will ensure adequacy and equity for all school districts and work with legislative leaders in 2018 and beyond to enact those priorities.



[CLICK HERE](#) to hear Bebe Verdery discuss ACLU policy priorities and the Kirwan Commission with the Baltimore Community Foundation

## Hundreds Attend Kirwan Commission's Public Hearings

**Funding "adequacy" and "equity" were common themes echoed by parents, students, and teachers across the state**

Before announcing a delay to completing the final report, the Kirwan Commission held four public hearings to solicit input from advocates statewide over the past two months. Based on the comments from stakeholders across the state, it is clear that students are not being served well by the state's current funding law. The need to ensure sufficient funding for special education services, additional staffing, and wrap around services for schools with high levels of poverty, and high quality pre-k programs for 3- and 4-year olds were recurring themes from parents, students, and teachers at the hearings.

**Baltimore City.** In Baltimore City, the commission added two additional hours to the hearing on October 12th to accommodate the 60 people that signed up to testify. The ACLU of Maryland (ACLU),

Baltimore Education Coalition (BEC), and allies, brought out nearly 800 people to the hearing. BEC members highlighted the need to ensure both "adequacy" and "equity" in education funding.

"Equitable does not mean equal, said Rev. Eric Lee, Director of Neighborhood Programs for Strong City Baltimore. "Equity means fairness and that each child get the amount of funding needed to succeed."

The ACLU highlighted the need to modify the formula, citing that it falls short of the need and that the state currently does not give additional funding to schools that have higher concentrations of poverty.

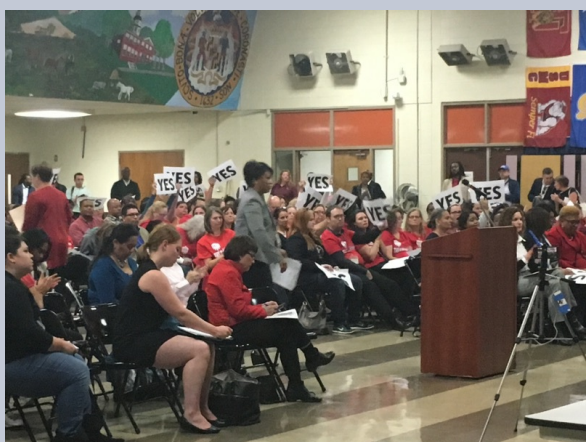
"Sufficient funding means an increase in the base per pupil and increases in the "weights" [generating funding] for low-income students, special education, ELL, and pre-k," said Kim Humphrey, Legislative Advocate for the ACLU. "Students in high poverty schools need summer school, afterschool, art, music, sports, career technology and apprenticeships, and a challenging culturally relevant curriculum."

Community Schools, afterschool, and full day pre-k programs for 3- and 4-year olds came up in dozens of testimonies as proven and effective strategies to bring down barriers to learning in schools with high poverty.

"Community Schools serve as hubs for coordinated wrap around support services to meet the unique needs of students and their family members," said Danista Hunte, Executive Director of the Child First Authority. "At Child First schools, afterschool programs have led to increased academic outcomes, improved behavior, and attendance."



Nearly 800 city residents came to the Kirwan Commission's 4-hour hearing at Poly High School on October 12th.



Hundreds attend the Kirwan Commission's hearing in Prince George's County on October 25th.

**Prince George's County.** Teachers, parents and community groups on October 25th brought to life the stark and dismal reality of their schools, what would help their students, and why the work is so important. Representatives and community members from Kent County, to Calvert, Montgomery County and all the way from Baltimore County, talked about their desire to provide students with the wrap-around services needed to help children thrive. They also shared how those services along with smaller class sizes would help teachers. Other common themes from the evening include the importance of early education,

addressing trauma and poverty, and the appropriate staff to properly service English Language Learners.


*"Community schools should be the new norm in Maryland to support families, students, and their communities," said a dual certified educator in special education and history.*

*"I have high school teachers who do not have enough textbooks for a class set," said a 30-year high school teacher.*

*"A fifth grade science teacher had so many students in her class that she had students sitting on the floor," exclaimed a veteran teacher.*

American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland | Education Reform Project

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