**Background and the Need:** Kirwan and a New Funding Formula 

Contact: [Joe Francaviglia](mailto:joe@strongschoolsmaryland.org)

**Background:**

Maryland is in the midst of a once in a generation opportunity to dramatically change its public education system from birth to college and career. The State Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (the Kirwan Commission, as it is led by former Maryland Chancellor Brit Kirwan) was charged with assessing what it would take to create a world-class education system in Maryland examining policies, practices and levels of resources necessary to ensure every student in Maryland has the opportunity to succeed. The Commission produced a bold report, that if fully implemented and funded, will transform the Maryland education system from middle of the pack to truly world-class. The report focuses on five policy initiatives: early childhood education, high-quality and diverse teachers and leaders, college and career readiness pathways, more resources to ensure all students are successful, and governance and accountability. Political will can be mustered to fully implement the Commission’s recommendations and resulting legislation but it will require Marylanders demanding their leaders be aggressive, work together, and seize this opportunity that has been created by the Kirwan Commission. The Commission’s work can become a national model for other states to follow. The full implementation of the Commission’s work will lead to Maryland producing a workforce and university students that can meet the demands of a 21st century economy.

**A Sample of the Need:**

* Democrats, Republicans, Independents, and all others want what is best for children but often times partisanship gets in the way. The Kirwan Commission is a bipartisan group of individuals selected by the Republican governor and the Democratic legislative leaders.
* The Kirwan Commission met for over two years, held 58 meetings, heard testimony from dozens of experts and advocates, commissioned studies and reports, and produced a 232 page report laying out the path to making Maryland world-class. The commission’s policy report was finalized with no dissenting votes.
* Maryland’s schools are full of dedicated individuals but are facing systemic issues that can be fixed:
  + State funding level is $2.9 billion below a 2002 definition of adequacy.
  + Fewer than 40% of high school graduates are “college and career ready”. This alone is creating a systemic crisis making university attendance inaccessible to most students and creating a gap in worker knowledge and skills that the 21st century economy demands.
  + 53% of black students attend underfunded schools; 8% of white students.
  + Since 2002, low-income students statewide have grown from 22% to 44%. 58% of Maryland schools serve a population of concentrated poverty.
  + Maryland is one of six states where the wealthiest 25% of school districts received more resources than the poorest 25%.

**Additional Resources:**

* [A summary sheet of the Kiwan policy recommendations](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VZj5B_AcHUqAGj1HUQ-TTlJuqqxI5uWe/view?usp=sharing)
* [Inequities in Opportunity and Achievement statistics from the Education Trust](http://education.baltimorecommunityfoundation.org/download/education-trust-report/?wpdmdl=202)
* [Full 232 page Kirwan report](http://dls.maryland.gov/pubs/prod/NoPblTabMtg/CmsnInnovEduc/2019-Interim-Report-of-the-Commission.pdf)