

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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Casinos / Rally(!): I emailed you about the Fix the Fund Rally in Annapolis (March 19). This rally marks renewed momentum to ensure casino revenue is used to supplement *not supplant* dollars for public schools in the state's Education Trust Fund. This must be done by constitutional amendment, to prevent future Governors or Legislatures from breaching the commitment made six years ago to increase Maryland's public schools. If the General Assembly approves bills HB 1687 or SB 1122, voters will decide this Fall to make this promise a reality.

KIRWAN COMMISSION BILL: I'm happy to report that the Early Literacy Program proposed under SB 485 (described in my previous email) has in fact been integrated into a larger Education bill being advanced through the legislature on behalf of the Kirwan Commission. This bill, HB 1415, is seeking to tackle a host of priorities, from addressing the achievement gap to boosting teacher training resources/standards; provisions include:

- Establishing the Learning in Extended Academic Programs (LEAP) grant program to provide additional funding for schools in which at least 90% of students qualify for federal free/reduced priced meals
- Expanding eligibility requirements for the Teaching Fellows for Maryland scholarship program;
- Establishing grants for more schools to build innovative a Career and Technology Education programs; and
- (of course) extending the final report date for the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education.

90-Day Session: The Maryland General Assembly meets in regular session for 90 calendar days each year beginning the 2nd Wednesday in January to act on 2,500+ bills and the State's annual capital and operating budgets. Dozens of education-related bills have been filed and committee hearings/mark-ups are getting underway. Legislation ranges from bills to issue reimbursement for AP, CTE, & IB exams (HB 197) to authorizing state agencies to compete with local health authorities to inspect school facilities (SB 469); from increases in test/standards for reading teachers (HB 493) to requirements that the State cover costs of breakfasts and lunches for students eligible for reduced-price meals (HB 315). Below are a couple of details on other bills of interest.

- **School Calendar:** [HB 679](#) overturns the annual school end-date set by the Governor by executive order in August 2016. It requires a public school to complete the school year on/before the 3rd Friday in June as opposed to the current limit of no later than June 15. After accounting for the 180-day school day minimum as well as mandatory State holidays and election days (for most counties), the bill will allow for a total of as few as 10 and as many as 15 days for local school systems to accommodate any additional holidays (including a spring break), teacher professional development days, and/or school closures due to weather and other exigencies within their respective school years.

 - **Details:** Entitled: "Public Schools - School Year - Completion Date," Sponsored by [Delegate Pena-Melnyk](#). **Status: In the House - Hearing was held 2/22.**

- **PARCC:** The Ways & Means Committee unfavorably reported on HB 723, which would have confined PARCC segments to 40min. Delegates Ebersole withdrew the bill since it would not have actually allowed students time to simulate researching/writing. (Most sections of the PARCC assessment in literacy involve sustained reading of two or more texts followed by a substantial writing piece. A longer test session over 40 minutes in duration is optimal for students; a limit of 40 minutes would drastically impact the type of questions/tasks students could complete in an uninterrupted session, particularly in literacy. On the other hand, [HB 366 had a hearing and is still being considered](#). This bill allows students with disabilities to be exempt from taking the PARCC assessment unless the parent/guardian has agreed that the student may participate, and it is documented in the Individualized Education Program (IEP). The MCPS Board of Ed is opposed to the bill since it potentially release school systems from needing to provide evidence-based, differentiated instruction to students with disabilities and would adversely impact the imperative for school systems to narrow the achievement gap between students with disabilities and their typical peers. Failing to measure the student outcomes of the special education subgroup would undermine the goal of the MCPS strategic planning framework which assumes that every child can learn when given the proper supports and services.

 - **Details:** Entitled: "Education - PARCC Testing - Children With Disabilities (Ben's Rule)." Sponsored by [Delegate Vogt](#), **Status: In the House - Hearing held 2/2**

- **Early Literacy:** The General Assembly sometimes opposes meaningful legislation to address the achievement gap due to perceived funding constraints. For example, the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee voted down
- **[SB 485](#)** which would have established an Early Literacy Program
 - to implement evidence-based literacy programs in Title I schools (to to meet literacy proficiency targets before 4th grade. MCPS has 25 Title I schools with ~16,000 students enrolled in Title I schools, roughly half (8,100) are ESOL. Currently, there is not one position designated for providing targeted early literacy intervention. Identifying an interventionist would increase quality. of instruction.
 - **Details:** Entitled: "Education - Maryland Early Literacy Initiative Program - Established." Sponsored by Senator [Conway](#). Status: Reported unfavorably and withdrawn.
- **More Funding for Head Start:** On the positive side, the Senate approved [SB 373](#). This bill will require the state to supplement federal Head Start funding with additional appropriations. Currently, funding from the Maryland legislature provides \$113,000 to Montgomery County to provide the Head Start summer program for children who are not enrolled in Title 1 schools for kindergarten. Of this amount of \$113,000, MCPS received \$106,000 to serve 120 children in a 4- or 5-week extended year program. The additional funding described in this bill would be divided among all of the Head Start programs in Maryland both Head Start (serving children aged 3–5) and Early Head Start (serving pregnant women and children aged 0–3). Each year in MCPS, there are approximately 1,200 Head Start-eligible students and only 648 can be served in the Head Start program (approximately 70 three-year olds-and 578 four-year-olds). The other Head Start-eligible children are served in the part-day prekindergarten program. The total cost for all Head Start-eligible 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds in Montgomery County would be approximately \$31,125,000. Additional funding to support these children is much needed and appreciated.
 - Details: Entitled: "Education - Head Start Program - Annual Appropriation (The Ulysses Currie Act). Sponsored by [Senator Currie](#). Status: In the Senate - Third Reading Passed (45-0)
- **Guidelines for Dual Immersion Schools:** [HB 642](#) requires the State Board of Ed to establish regulations/guidance for implementing Dual Immersion school programs. There are currently three Dual Language Immersion Programs offered in MCPS. They are located at Brown Station, Kemp Mill, and Washington

Grove elementary schools. All three programs meet the definition of “Dual Language Immersion Program” as provided in this bill, with one exception. The bill requires the use of two teachers, with one for each language. This is the expected model at MCPS; however, student enrollment at Brown Station Elementary School created the need for a fifth kindergarten classroom, and the odd numbered class is allocated only one teacher, who delivers the instruction in both languages. There are concerns that certain definitions/requirements in the legislation would hinder MCPS’ efforts in expanding Dual Immersion. As such, MCPS may be seeking amendments to support the intentions of this bill (but highlighting the importance of local control on the specifics of these programs).

- Details: Entitled: "Education - Dual Language Immersion Program - Authorization." Sponsored by [Delegate Gutierrez](#). Status: **Hearing was held 2/16. Awaiting further Committee action.**

Of course, many, many bills have been filed and are being considered. If you hear of particular legislation and want more information, or would like us to advance priorities you’re afraid are not being considered, please let me know.

Let's talk and advocate!!!