



Maryland Education Coalition

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RE: Response to the delay of the (Kirwan) Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education Report

The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) was disappointed to learn that last week the Kirwan Commission decided to delay the submission of their final report to the General Assembly until a still unannounced date. Originally due, December 15, 2017, it has been reported that at least one of the reasons for the delay is, *“there’s not enough time to calculate the costs of the commission’s recommendations or come up with suggestions for paying for them before the new legislative session begins in January”*. It was also reported that the Commission wanted *“to get the report right”*. MEC agrees, but can the students and educators wait?

MEC is dedicated to improving outcomes for all students in Maryland public schools by promoting equitable access to high quality programs and services, adequate and equitable funding for public education, and vigorous systemic accountability. This is consistent with the Maryland Constitution, which states that: *“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.”*

Currently, it is unclear how significant this delay will be for our nearly 900,000 public school students and 24 school systems. Among the more immediate concerns of MEC and many of our partners includes the following:

- There is at least a \$1.6 billion Adequacy Funding Gap currently, impacting 20 of 24 school districts based on FY 2015 data (FY 18 unknown) and funding for public education has been relatively flat since 2009. This has already caused significant cuts in staffing, programs or student services and delays improvements or increases in others such as Pre-K, Community Schools, Student Services, advance courses and much more
- Since 2009, student enrollment has increased nearly 5% (38,000) from 848,000 to 886,000 and the percentage of Special Population students (Poverty, Limited-English, Special Ed) also increased 5% (40,371)
- There are also increasing concerns regarding the recruitment, retention, and training of highly qualified educators, administrators and support personnel, especially from Maryland colleges.

Pending US Department of Education approval, the ESSA State Plan must be implemented. Will the Commission use this as a guide during the decision-making of their pending report recommendations?

- What is the new Kirwan Commission Report deadline and timelines for the General Assembly?
- What plans and supports will the state put in place to more rapidly increase the number of students at all levels and within all student subgroups that will perform at least a four (4) on the PARRC assessments at all levels while closing achievement gaps for all student groups?
- Will the state be able to implement costly sections of the ESSA State Plan until adequate, equitable funding is approved for all students in all school districts?
- How will the state increase access to Pre-K and Community School Programs in high poverty schools?