



Montgomery County Council

From the Office of Councilmember Craig Rice

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State Legislators Now Considering Bills to Support Kirwan Recommendations

ROCKVILLE, Md., Feb. 13, 2020—The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future, a groundbreaking overhaul of Maryland’s public education system, was officially introduced on Feb. 7 in the Maryland General Assembly. The bipartisan Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education was charged in 2016 with recommending how to prepare students for a changing global economy and create a world class education system. Those recommendations generated The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future (House Bill 1300/Senate Bill 1000) and include the expansion of pre-kindergarten, increasing teacher compensation, determining college and career pathways, and differentiating funding to meet the needs of all students.

Councilmember Craig Rice, Chair of the County Council’s Education and Culture Committee, served on the Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education and led the Early Childhood Education Working Group. Having been heavily involved in the intricacies of The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future, Rice noted, “A great deal of research-based practices aimed at increasing educational outcomes were brought to the table and incorporated into this plan. We cannot waste time in implementing these recommendations as each piece within the five major policy areas are interdependent. Each recommendation is required to achieve the outcomes that our children and youth need to prepare for the future of work.”

Defined as a “once-in-a-generation” opportunity to comprehensively improve Maryland public schools, the 199-page bill is supported by Maryland businesses as an avenue to stimulate economic development through educational reform. Increasing the quality of education will produce individuals who are better prepared to enter the workforce and spur a more robust economy. The need is great as Maryland’s public school system currently ranks 29th in the nation with fewer than 40 percent of graduating students able to read at a 10th grade level or pass an Algebra I assessment. Without an immediate and comprehensive change, Maryland will delay or even lose the opportunity to address workforce and economic challenges in the state.

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The Commission studied other jurisdictions to include Massachusetts who passed their own version of an education overhaul, the Education Reform Act of 1993, that is credited with improving the quality of the state's schools and yielding measurably higher salaries. The large investment in education is associated with an impressive increase in innovation in and around Boston and its accompanying rejuvenation. Despite their deep commitment, Rice reports that "Massachusetts is telling us that our Maryland Blueprint surpasses their efforts and could have a greater impact than what they experienced."

Financing the full implementation of The Blueprint will rely on a combination of state and local funding over a 10-year phase-in period. Legislators will need to focus on a fair and equitable model that balances the primary role of the state in funding public education coupled with local support. The first three years of the 10-year plan have already been funded in Governor Larry Hogan's most recent budget. Montgomery County would not see any increases in their local contribution until FY2022. By year 10, 2030, Montgomery County's contribution is estimated to increase by 14 percent over current projected increases.

Rice urged legislators and others to support The Blueprint for Maryland's Future, saying "As we determine how both the state and local jurisdictions will fund these critical changes, we cannot afford to not pass this legislation. Remember that it also mandates the creation of an Accountability and Implementation Board to ensure the fidelity of the implementation. With education being the critical foundation for workforce and economic development, the next generation is depending on us to get this right."

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