

MSEA 2020 Legislative Priorities

Strong Schools Work for Our Students, Educators, and Communities

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to deliver strong schools for every neighborhood in Maryland. Strong schools work for Maryland by expanding career and technical education, hiring more educators and increasing their pay, providing additional support to struggling learners, and creating a more prosperous future for our state. Accomplishing these goals will require the adoption of a new funding formula and a renewed commitment from state and local officials to fund schools equitably and adequately.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future

Hire More Educators and Increase Their Pay: Half of all educators work a second job to make ends meet and the average teacher makes just 85 cents on the dollar compared to similar fields. We must make progress on teacher salaries and ensure that there is a living wage for the 24,000+ education support professionals whose wages fall short of that standard. The Blueprint recommends hiring 15,000 new educators to support restructured work days for more planning, collaboration time, and individualized instruction—as well as improving class sizes and caseloads.

Equity for All Students and Schools: Maryland's current funding formula has proven to be both insufficient and inequitable in meeting the needs of all students. We must prioritize equity and ensure more resources for students who need it most, including the adoption of additional funding for schools in areas of concentrated poverty that will greatly expand the community school model. We also support increased investments to match the needs and increased proficiency standards for English language learners and students receiving special education supports, as well as providing state resources for pre-k students and expanding early childhood education programs.

Recruit and Retain Diverse Educators and Leaders: Improving teacher preparation programs, expanding professional development

opportunities, and building a diverse workforce are all part of strengthening our profession. We will oppose efforts to weaken or narrow educator credentialing standards. We will fight to ensure an equitable expansion of investments in education preparation programs, particularly in our Historically Black Colleges and Universities. MSEA and our local affiliates will also seek to work with institutions of higher education and local school systems to improve trauma-informed instruction, cultural competency, and bias awareness, along with additional training on restorative justice practices for incoming educators.

Accountability and Improved Educator and Stakeholder Voice: Strong schools depend on increased funding and improved accountability. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future creates a new accountability system that will ensure funding is improving instruction, support, educational opportunities, and equity for all students. We oppose one-size-fits-all mandates around curriculum requirements, professional development, school accountability, educator evaluation programs, and other issues that should be decided at the local level and/or with the input of educators in the collective bargaining process. This type of stakeholder support and voice is critical to ensuring that reforms are sustainable and in the best interest of students and local communities.

Other Critical Issues

Fair and progressive tax policy: The Blueprint proposals can only succeed if policymakers back them with sufficient resources. This is an opportunity to focus on eliminating loopholes and tax breaks that benefit special interests and fix our upside-down tax code, which allows the wealthiest individuals to pay the smallest share of their income in state and local taxes.

Support the Built to Learn Act: MSEA supports the Built to Learn Act to infuse billions more into new construction and school renovation efforts to provide safe and modern facilities to learn and work in. We also support efforts to prioritize this funding to help expand career and technical education facilities and programs in our schools as well as facilities appropriate for pre-k programs in our public elementary schools.

Reject vouchers and oppose discrimination in nonpublic schools that receive public funding: MSEA opposes the continuation of the BOOST voucher program. As our public schools face billions of dollars in unmet needs, it is unconscionable that public dollars are diverted to private schools that—free of any accountability standards—underperform

in comparison to public schools. As we oppose vouchers, we will also fight to ensure that any nonpublic school that does receive public dollars cannot impose discriminatory policies on staff, students or families based on race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.

Expand collective bargaining rights: MSEA will work to expand and defend the power of collective bargaining, allow all public employees the right to organize, clarify the oversight role of labor relations boards, and allow class sizes to be a permissible subject of bargaining.

Support students inside and outside the classroom: Guaranteeing safe schools and improving school climate for students and educators while in the school building is an absolute necessity. We also know there are many factors outside of school that can interfere with many of our students' ability to learn. That's why we are proud coalition partners in advancing health care reforms, criminal justice reforms, expanded meals in school programs, protections for immigrants, and other ways to ensure fairness for every Maryland family.

For more information, contact MSEA Government Relations at 410/263-6600 or mseagr@mseanea.org



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