

# MSEA Legislative Priorities 2019

Maryland has a \$2.9 billion annual shortage in funding for public education according to an independent analysis. That means each of our schools, on average, is underfunded by more than \$2 million every year. We've seen this funding gap negatively impact students, educators, and schools across the state for years. The Kirwan Commission is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to revamp and improve the state's school funding formula and close the funding gap. We must use it to make a new Maryland Promise to our families that all kids have a great public school—and an equal opportunity for success—no matter their neighborhood.

While we anticipate that the Kirwan Commission will make policy and formula recommendations on a wide range of issues, MSEA is reserving judgement on those specific recommendations until they can be fully vetted. Our bottom line will be to use this moment to fight for the policy and budget solutions to support world-class public schools that meet the growing and diverse needs of all students.

## Expected Action from Kirwan

### **Increasing pay for Maryland's educators:**

Educators devote their lives to making a difference for every single child in their community. Yet as a state, we have allowed educators to become overworked and undervalued. We must make progress on teacher salaries—Maryland teachers make 86% of what their peers in professions requiring comparable degrees and credentials do. It's time to ensure a living wage for education support professionals; today, more than 24,000 support staff fall short of that reasonable standard.

### **Improving staffing levels and school safety:**

Beyond salaries, the state must address out of control class sizes and caseloads that are growing each year. Adding paraprofessionals and adopting recommended staffing ratios for student support services will improve working and learning conditions in our schools. Maryland has made progress to promote restorative justice, but more must be done to create a productive learning and working environment for everyone in our schools.

**Funding to meet growing needs:** More supports are necessary for at-risk students and schools educating students who live in concentrated areas of poverty. Risk factors requiring additional financial and staffing support include students receiving special education services, English language learners, and students in Title I schools. Supports include expansion of Pre-K programs, community schools, social and emotional learning standards, and the use of trauma-informed instruction practices.

### **Sustainable solutions that empower local**

**stakeholders:** School leaders and personnel who know the names of students are the ones most capable of making decisions that impact curriculum and supports. We oppose one-size-fits-all mandates around curriculum requirements, professional development, school accountability, 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 Major Issues

**Rejecting vouchers and public funding of private schools:** 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 public schools.

**Listening to the voices of educators and parents:** MSEA will work with parents and other stakeholders to add specific seats on the Maryland State Board of Education for active teachers and a parent. This legislation passed in 2018, but because of an election year veto, passage is necessary again in this upcoming session.

**Defending and strengthening Maryland's charter school law:** Efforts from U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos to create and proliferate unaccountable charter schools is the wrong policy for Maryland. Our state has the best charter school law in the nation because it strikes the right balance between local control, accountability, and innovative instruction. It should be defended and strengthened to avoid the corruption and fiscal mismanagement of tax dollars that have plagued other states with weaker laws.

**Supporting coalition efforts to advance paid family leave:** Educators will work in coalition to pass paid family leave, which helps build stronger families, healthier communities, workplaces with more productive employees, and students who are ready to learn.

**Supporting students inside and outside the classroom:** While educators make a huge difference for students inside the classroom, we know there are factors outside of school that can interfere with many of our students' ability to learn. When a child's parent goes to prison or faces deportation, that hurts the student's ability to be successful in school. That's why we are proud coalition partners in advancing criminal justice reform, 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](mailto:mseagr@mseanea.org)**



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