

## **Blueprint becomes law-- now what?**

For the past several years, the Kirwan Commission has been researching best practices in high performing education systems and curating those recommendations into legislation: the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. While the initial legislation was vetoed by Governor Hogan, the Maryland House and Senate successfully overrode the veto and passed the Blueprint into law last week. What now?

Contrary to popular belief and the persistent claims of the Governor, Maryland's state education funding has been mediocre, at best, when compared to other states. State education funding is typically ranked on a few key indicators:

- Overall funding level (adequacy)
- Funding distribution equity (progressivity)
- Funding relative to a state's economic capacity (fiscal effort)

In the [School Finance Indicators Database January 2021 report](#) (FY18 data), Maryland ranks 17th in adequacy, 24th in progressivity, and 26th in fiscal effort. In a word: average.

These national comparisons confirm what the Kirwan Commission discovered: Maryland's education funding has been regressive and inadequate for years, especially among high-poverty districts. According to the state finance profile in the aforementioned report, "In its highest-poverty districts, Maryland's spending is 17.6% below the adequate level." The Blueprint for Maryland's Future promises supplemental funding and more equitable resources for Maryland students. However, much of the successful implementation and outcomes of these new resources will hinge on districts' ability to direct dollars strategically and equitably to the students who need them most.

It's critical for states to evaluate the equity and adequacy of state funding models, but the impact of targeted state dollars can be quickly eroded unless districts are simultaneously re-evaluating the equity of their own formulas in terms of allocating district revenue to schools. This is particularly important in Maryland, where districts and counties are coterminous, which means there are some of the largest school districts in the country, often with significant differences in student demographics between schools.

New regulations in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) require districts to report school-level actual per-pupil spending at the federal level. Through these data reports, many districts are realizing that legacy methods of funding and staffing allocation are producing spending patterns that are more equal than equitable. Other districts are uncovering disparities in spending that reveal more severe inequities in which the highest-need students are not receiving the additional resources they need to thrive.

An infusion of new MD Blueprint dollars is the perfect time to reassess how your district funding is allocated to individual schools and its impact on student-level resource equity across

sub-enrollment groups. How does your district define equity? Does your resource allocation model uphold this definition? If your district has traditionally used a staffing allocation model, does an analysis of per-pupil spending, including actual salaries, create unintended disparities across schools? Whether your district has been tweaking your resource allocation model for years or you're thinking about re-evaluating your resource strategy for the first time in decades. The Blueprint funding presents a unique opportunity to critically evaluate resource allocation at the district, school, and student levels.