



House Bill 999

Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

Date: March 31, 2016

To: Budget and Taxation Committee

From: Robin Clark Eilenberg, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 999. This legislation establishes the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education to review the findings of the Study of Adequacy in Education Funding in Maryland and to make recommendations for changes to Maryland's current state and local education funding.

MACo supports a multi-stakeholder review of education funding requirements and formulas, many of which could benefit from updating and reconsideration. MACo also appreciates the inclusion of two county representatives on the Commission, analogous to those on the "Thornton" Commission during the last major such review.

County governments have concerns that current education funding formulas discourage cooperation and collaboration between county governments and county school boards. To ensure that these concerns are addressed head-on by the Commission, MACo suggested an amendment to the legislation which was adopted by the House and appears in the amended version of HB 999 before you today.

On Page 5 of the legislation, MACo's amendment requests the Commission to make recommendations for "ensuring that State laws promote collaboration between county governments and local school systems." County governments hope that this addition to the Commission's charge will lead to review of state laws and suggestions for revisions to current laws to better encourage collaboration between counties and school boards, and remove any impediments to cooperation.

County governments have other concerns regarding current education funding law, including the State's wealth calculation, funding of jurisdictions with declining enrollment, and connecting K-12 systems with workforce needs. MACo raised these topics in our testimony on SB 905, the Senate version of the legislation. MACo will continue to advocate on these issues through the county membership on the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education and the Study of Adequacy in Education Funding in Maryland.

For these reasons, MACo requests the Committee's **FAVORABLE** report on HB 999.