



House Bill 1413

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future

(recommendations from the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education)

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Ways and Means and Appropriations
Committees

Date: March 13, 2019

From: Michael Sanderson

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1413. This bill implements the “blueprint” for the goals of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education, and takes first steps toward funding multiple educational priorities shared across multiple stakeholders including counties. Even with the longer-term efforts of the Commission still unfolding, and the county obligation toward those ends still unclear, county governments support these steps to target new funding, provide new direction and accountability, and set new expectations for Maryland’s educational system.

With multiple facets of the bill largely addressing the overlapping interests of the State and the local Boards of Education, county governments’ principal interest under Maryland law is with the state and local funding structure. HB 1413 provides some limited changes in this regard.

The “teacher salary incentive grant program” envisioned under the bill incorporates (very preliminarily) one element of the Commission’s recommendations toward new, far higher compensation levels for classroom teachers. The grant program is available if the county government can demonstrate that its own locally appropriated school budget sufficiently funds a 3% salary increase for teachers in each of the next two budget years. For those who do so, the State would then provide additional state “grant” funding for additional teacher pay and incentives, with a suggestion that the new funds be targeted to new hires and early career employees. This effort on recruiting and retention is warranted and valuable, and on balance the local “match” is not unreasonable.

Another beneficial facet is the uncodified Section 10, which seeks to reduce any “chilling effect” that might otherwise be present for counties who invest beyond their required funding levels for the coming fiscal year. By specifying that the General Assembly intends to (paraphrasing) “give the county credit” for any such funding this year, the bill could help

avoid county reluctance to invest this year for fear of merely setting a higher funding “base” for subsequent new obligations in future years. With the potentially dramatic funding commitments looming for some of the Commission recommendations, this concern is reasonable. Section 10 is a well-intentioned and welcome effort to proactively address this concern.

One arena where clarifying language could be helpful would be the interplay among different bargaining unit contracts within one county. It is common for classes of employees to negotiate for parity clauses, ensuring that general provisions granted to another unit automatically trigger for them. With the Commission, and the legislation, so specifically targeting teachers as the essence of the directed funding, an uncodified statement seeking to avoid inadvertently encompassing these other costs would help promote broad participation.

Overall, HB 1413 makes broad policy and programmatic pledges, and begins the course-setting envisioned by the Commission in its years of work. Much of this work still lies ahead. For counties, most of the ultimate fiscal consequences—and their spillover effect on other public priorities—have yet to be spelled out. Counties expect to be central to the development of any plan to finance, realign, and apportion the costs of these ambitious, but expensive, goals.

HB 1413 represents a first step—and a first commitment of meaningful State resources—to education improvements to advance our schools’ competitiveness and outcomes. The reasonable county incentive program to begin advancing teacher compensation, and the sensible clause to recognize county investments in advance of new mandates, are both good faith efforts toward a productive funding partnership. For these reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS** HB 1413, and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.