

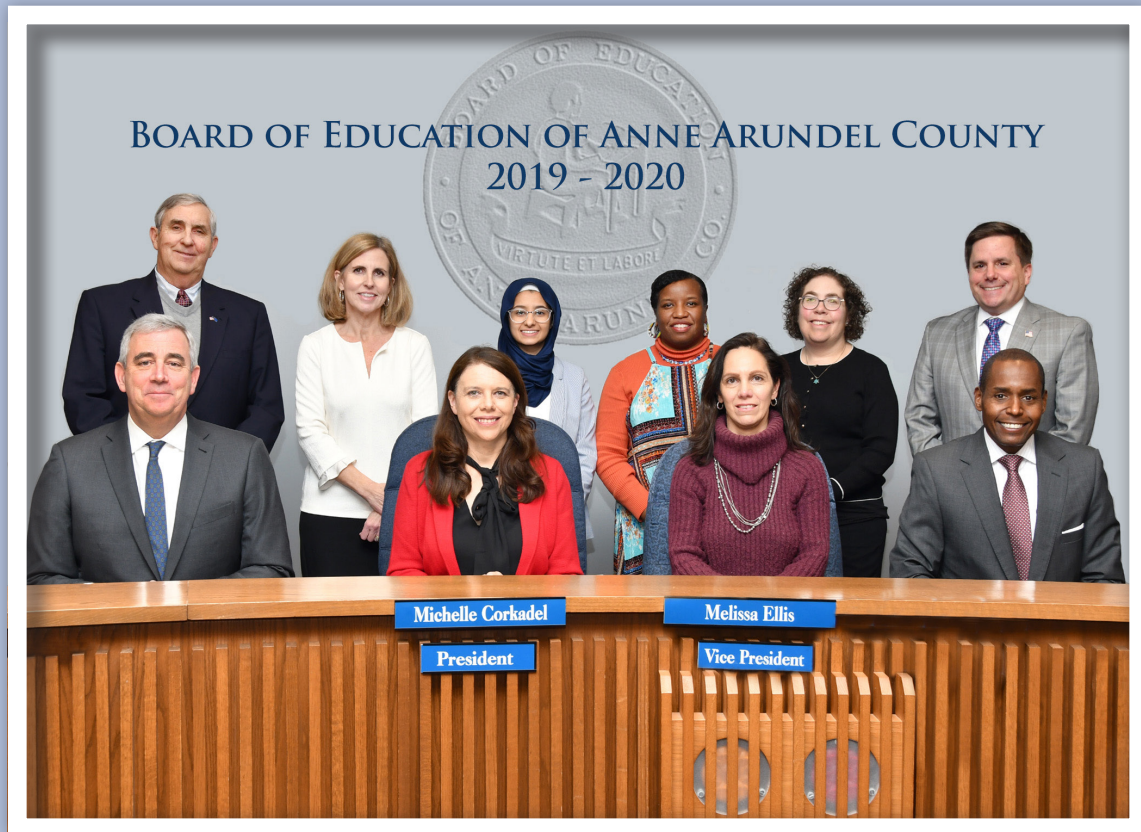


2020

Board of Education of Anne Arundel County

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM





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BOARD OF EDUCATION OF ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) works to provide a challenging and rewarding educational experience for all children. Our school system is the fourth largest in Maryland and the 38th largest in the United States. Approximately 85,000 AACPS students in prekindergarten through 12th grade are educated in 77 elementary schools, 19 middle schools, 13 high schools, six evening high school campuses, three special education centers, two centers for applied technology, two alternative education academies, three early education centers, two public charter schools, and two public contract schools. At the heart of everything we do, our goal is to ensure that all students meet or exceed standards as achievement gaps are eliminated. Our philosophy is simple: All Means All.

To achieve our goal, we envision that every student will graduate from high school able to read critically, write coherently, think creatively, and solve complex mathematical problems. Students will be equipped to become contributing, compassionate citizens of the United States as members of an increasingly global community.

With an emphasis on access and equity, we provide an array of opportunities for public school choice through programs of rigor and relevance that we believe will allow students to reach their full potential and to be outstanding citizens and difference makers. These innovative educational programs include:

- Eight magnet program tracks where students get to rigorously explore their interests talents, and abilities in highly-specialized instructional settings.
- Twelve signature programs that bring students, educators and the local business community together through a workforce-relevant theme designed to excite, engage, and prepare students for college and careers.
- The Triple E (Enhancing Elementary Excellence) initiative, which offers project-based learning, exciting experiences, and the opportunity to increase achievement for some of our youngest learners.

We also recognize that student achievement is not all about academics. Through top-notch school services such as school counseling, food and nutrition, and facilities maintenance operations, AACPS seeks to give our students a supportive environment to encourage success.

With a laser-like focus on every student, in every class, in every school in our county, we intend to be the best school system in the State of Maryland and one of the best in the nation. AACPS is—and must remain—committed not just to reducing achievement and opportunity gaps, but to eliminating them.

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ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

The single most important strategic goal of the Board of Education of Anne Arundel County (Board) is to ensure that every student meets or exceeds standards as achievement gaps are eliminated. We will aim to elevate all students while eliminating all gaps. As such, we believe that specific emphasis should be on increasing underrepresented student groups and minority student participation in challenging academic programs.

AACPS SUPPORTS

- An equitable learning environment that promotes an atmosphere of respect and nondiscrimination for all students and staff members regardless of actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, genetic information, gender identity, or disability.
- Adequate funding for the development and implementation of programs that increase student participation in rigorous learning. This includes funding for no-cost honors courses, Advanced Placement courses, the International Baccalaureate program, and career and technology education programs.
- State and local sharing or State assumption of the significant examination fees for students, particularly for those who are financially disadvantaged. As such, these fees present a disincentive to enrollment and participation in advanced studies programs.
- The Maryland College and Career Ready Standards and a corresponding assessment to monitor student progress towards achievement of such standards.
- State recognition of career-readiness for students who attain industry-certification which will allow students to enter the workforce immediately after high school.
- Teacher accountability to ensure that students are adequately educated and prepared to succeed in higher education in an increasing global economy.
- Increased co-curricular opportunities and experiences that promote student application in authentic and relevant coursework of interest.
- Additional programs and resources to assist with meeting the varied needs of English language learners.
- Interdisciplinary connections that create meaning and significance for students to apply their learning to personal connections, real world applications, and 21st Century skills.
- Adequate funding to provide social and emotional supports to all students.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

The Maryland Public Charter School Act of 2003 established an alternative means within the existing public school system to provide innovative learning opportunities and creative educational approaches to improve student education. The law was amended in 2011 and most recently in 2015. As a result, charter schools now have access to available surplus school property. The current law provides greater flexibility for successful charter schools and requires a study of the amount of funding provided to public charter schools and other public schools by local school systems in the State.

AACPS believes that charter schools should be established in response to an unmet need or unmet resources a school system cannot provide. Charter school providers should collaborate with the school system, in a strategic manner, to ensure alignment with school district initiatives for additional school choice for students and parents.

AACPS SUPPORTS

- Charter school compliance with federal and State laws governing public schools, including fiscal responsibility and accountability.
- High academic accountability of all charter schools.
- An application window that allows local school systems to set a due date for charter school applications in order to allow school districts adequate planning time to address financial, staffing, transportation, and scheduling needs.
- The legislative establishment of a baseline level of funding for charter schools while holding school districts harmless for certain costs that do not decrease as students leave to attend charter schools. Examples include, operational, utility and maintenance expenses, career and technology education expenses, borrowing expenses, legal expenses, and special education expenses.
- Making a charter school accountable to the local board of education of the district in which it is located to ensure that students are receiving an adequate well-rounded education and public funds are spent appropriately.
- Reconsideration by the State Board of Education on the definition of “commensurate funding” so as to allow a local board of education and charter applicant to negotiate regarding the statutory requirement to “disburse to a public charter school an amount of county, State and federal funding for elementary, middle, and secondary students that is commensurate with the amount disbursed to other public schools.”
- Legislation to establish specific procedures for addressing the disposition of a charter school’s assets, including State technical assistance, upon the school’s closure or dissolution.
- Legislation to clarify ownership of failed charter school assets that have been purchased with public funds.
- Legislation authorizing school systems to immediately recover funds when students transfer back to traditional public schools from charter schools.
- Efforts that provide opportunities to implement school level reform and creative models of delivering instructional programs within the limits of AACPS resources.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

AACPS OPPOSES

- Legislation that creates blanket waivers for charter schools and releases them from compliance with State law and local board policies.
- Legislation that permits internet-based “virtual charter schools” that promote home schools.
- Efforts to weaken academic accountability, fiscal accountability, or obligations of public charter schools to local boards of education.
- The allocation and use of local school system funds as part of a county’s contingency funding for future charter school projects.
- Efforts to expand the sole authorization of public charter schools beyond local boards of education.
- Efforts that compel local school systems to provide land, space, or facilities to public charter schools.
- Legislation that negatively impacts the local relationship between charter school operators and the local school system.
- Attempts to allow charter school operators to participate in Maryland’s Capital Improvement Plan.



COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE & STUDENT DISCIPLINE

The interplay between State compulsory attendance requirements and suspension and expulsion requirements is an ongoing challenge for local school systems. This challenge has increased with the passage of legislation over the last several years that has resulted in greater responsibilities and restrictions for school systems. For example, in 2012, the General Assembly passed a legislation that increased the age of compulsory attendance from age 15 to age 18. Most recently, the General Assembly passed legislation in 2017 which limits the use of suspensions and expulsions for students in prekindergarten through second grade. The new law is in addition to student discipline regulations limiting local school board authority that were passed by the State Board of Education in 2014. Ultimately, school systems must strike a balance between the educational rights of all students, including those causing disruption in the classroom, and the school system's responsibility to educate all students in a safe environment that is conducive to learning.

AACPS BELIEVES

- What occurs in the classroom can be the variable that allows young people to overcome hardships sometimes imposed upon them by their home environment and community.
- Education is a community responsibility and everyone is accountable — the Board of Education, Superintendent of Schools, principals, teachers, staff, students, parents/guardians, and the larger community.
- Safe, supportive, healthy, and orderly learning environments are necessary to support student achievement.
- All students deserve the opportunity to learn in an environment that is free from disruption and detrimental behavior.
- School discipline should be administered fairly, equitably, and consistently in accordance with due process protections.

AACPS SUPPORTS

- An increased level of responsibility and duty on behalf of the parents/guardians for the disruptive or detrimental behavior of a student, while acknowledging the continued responsibility of the school system to intervene with strategies that will promote positive behaviors and educational success.
- Local flexibility to create and enforce consistent and fair disciplinary standards in order to respond to behaviors that violate the *AACPS Code of Student Conduct*.

AACPS OPPOSES

- Legislation that would impose a “one size fits all” statewide approach to discipline.
- Legislation that dictates under what circumstances schools must implement in-school versus out-of-school suspensions.
- Efforts to limit the authority of school administrators and the school system to help ensure the safety of all students and staff.

FEDERAL SUPPORT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

Federal support and funding is essential to providing AACPS students a quality education. The Board of Education of Anne Arundel County (Board) endorses federal support of education with minimal federal mandates. The Board particularly opposes the imposition of federal mandates that are not adequately funded or that impose undue burdens on local school systems. Without full funding for education programs, school districts will continue to face challenges in fulfilling federal requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and special education mandates under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

For example, federal funding is essential in special education. Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) will spend more than \$151million in FY 2020 to provide direct services to approximately 9,600, students with disabilities. However, AACPS will receive only \$23.8 million in federal special education funding. As such, increased funding is necessary to provide our special education students with access to high quality programs and instruction to meet their unique needs.

Federal funding is also vital to ensuring that students receive healthy meals. AACPS recognizes that school meals are an important part of our students' health and wellness. Our school system operates a comprehensive program aligned with federal and State child nutrition programs to help ensure that children are receiving nutritious meals and snacks that promote health and educational readiness.

AACPS SUPPORTS

- Full funding for mandated public education programs, specifically ESEA, a top priority in adopting the federal budget, and all federal education programs.
- Federal legislation to amend ESEA in order to provide more flexibility in determining student, school, and school system progress.
- Increased funding and continuation of the Title I program that serves school-age children from low-income families.
- Continuation and appropriate modification of the impact aid program in recognition of the significant amount of funding required to educate AACPS children associated with Fort George G. Meade, the United States Naval Academy, and the National Security Agency. In FY 2020, AACPS expects to spend \$129.3 million to educate more than 8,900 military connected children, yet we will only receive \$2.15 million in impact aid to meet the needs of our students.
- Increased funding for and access to National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Commodity Supplemental Food Program, Child and Adult Care Program, Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Program, and the Summer Food Service Program.
- Revision of income eligibility guidelines for federal child nutrition programs so that the “free” meal category is consistent with the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.
- Federal assistance in educational technology funding, such as continuation of the E-Rate program.
- A funding level for special education that would meet the federal commitment to fund 40 percent of the excess costs of special education.
- Continuation of Medicaid reimbursement for school-based administrative and transportation services for students with disabilities.
- Adequate funding to support the State-mandated translation of IEPs.
- Adequate funding for the increased demand for interpreters and assistive technology.



FEDERAL SUPPORT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

AACPS OPPOSES

- Actions by the federal government, under the guise of “sequestration,” “across the board cuts,” or “spending freezes” to arbitrarily reduce education funding to local districts and, in particular, the most vulnerable student populations such as the disabled, poor, and disadvantaged; and English language learners, without regard to articulated priorities and needs.
- Unfunded federal mandates, including requirements to sustain programs initiated but not maintained through grant funding.



FUNDING OF EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

The fundamental and essential building blocks for Anne Arundel County's healthy economic and successful workforce development, and the expansion of the County's commercial tax base are found in the quality of our public schools. We are doing our part to prepare students for the future. Students in each Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) graduating class add approximately \$1.8 billion in value to the local economy. The young people we are educating today will become the future leaders, entrepreneurs, and skilled employees of tomorrow. Their college and career preparation is necessary to maintain our competitiveness in an ever-changing world and global market.

In 2016, the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (Kirwan Commission) was established to review and assess current education funding formulas and accountability measures, and how each local school system is spending its funds, including the increased State funds provided through the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act. The work of the Kirwan Commission has confirmed what we already know: that Maryland public schools are in need of adequate funding. The General Assembly passed legislation to establish The Blueprint for Maryland's Future as State education policy, based on the recommendations of the Kirwan Commission. Recommendations from the Commission resulted in preliminary funding for various grants and the establishment or modification of several programs, including funding for full day prekindergarten; teacher salary grants; concentration of poverty grants; additional special education funding; teacher collaboration grants; funding for mental health coordinators; and supplemental instruction grants.

As expectations and standards rise, increased per-pupil spending is necessary to continue the educational success of Anne Arundel County and the State of Maryland. Adequate funding for Pre-K–12 public education is essential in ensuring that all AACPS students have access to the appropriate programs and instructional support they need to meet rigorous standards and expectations, and ensure that AACPS is elevating all students and eliminating all gaps.

AACPS BELIEVES

- An educated and skilled population as a result of quality public Pre-K–12 schools, community colleges and universities is a critical factor in business location decisions. The decision of a corporation or company to locate or expand in Anne Arundel County positively impacts the real estate market and the commercial tax base, and just as importantly, improves quality of life for all citizens in our county.
- The academic performance and reputation of Anne Arundel County's Pre-K–12 schools all play a significant role in the relocation decisions of both corporate entities and individual citizens.
- Recruiting and retaining businesses in Anne Arundel County and the City of Annapolis is critical to maintaining a strong balanced tax base.
- Tax revenue from the commercial sector in Anne Arundel County far exceeds the cost of the services these businesses require and aids in reducing the dependency on residential tax revenues.
- Strong State and county funding support of Pre-K–12 public education will ensure that all students have the programs, services, and instructional support needed to meet rigorous standards established for student performance.



FUNDING OF EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

AACPS SUPPORTS

- Full funding of The Blueprint for Maryland's Future.
- The charge of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education to review and address education funding issues in Maryland, particularly the enormous statewide education funding gap, which lags by over \$2.8 billion in State funding and over \$1.2 billion in local government investments.
- Full funding of the Geographic Cost of Education Index because it recognizes that there are regional differences in the cost of education that are a result of factors outside the control of local jurisdictions.
- Consideration of all available revenue options to support Maryland's public schools.
- Adequate funding by the Anne Arundel County Executive and Anne Arundel County Council in compliance with the 2012 decision by the Maryland State Board of Education to fully address the needs of public education in this county as articulated by the Board of Education.
- Full per-pupil funding allocation for students attending college under the Maryland College and Career Readiness and College Completion Act of 2013, as school systems are responsible for tuition payments to the institutions of higher education.
- Full per-pupil funding allocation for students attending prekindergarten without any offsetting reduction in compensatory education funding.
- Full per-pupil funding allocation for adjudicated youth and students placed in alternative settings by administrative agencies including, the Department of Human Services, Department of Health, Department of Juvenile Services, and the local departments of social services.
- State funding for English Language Acquisition teachers to provide effective English language instruction to English language learners and help them successfully integrate into the educational system.
- Adequate and equitable funding for federal- and State-mandated programs and policies.

AACPS OPPOSES

- Additional State mandates, unless they are in accord with system priorities and accompanied by sufficient and ongoing State funding.
- Unfunded mandates which diminish the ability of local school systems to respond to unique needs and circumstances; or result in the lack of equitable access or excellence.
- Any amount of public funding allocated to private schools, under any name, such as vouchers, certificates, and scholarships, given the many unmet needs in public schools and the fact that nonpublic schools are neither subject to State accountability measures nor to the same legal requirements as public schools.
- Legislation mandating that public schools accommodate private or home-schooled students in academic or extracurricular programs offered in public schools.
- Adjustments to the various funding formulas that would adversely impact AACPS' ability to deliver instruction and supports for our students.

LABOR RELATIONS AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

While respectful of the salutary role of unions and the bilateral nature of collective bargaining, the Board of Education of Anne Arundel County is mindful that the Board has the fiscal responsibility for the school system, pursuant to law, and the obligation to balance the needs of the students and public against the needs and desires of its employees. Moreover, the Board is cognizant of laws addressing negotiations in due process for employee discipline and other matters, and the role of the Public School Labor Relations Board (PSLRB) which has assumed responsibilities previously vested in the State Superintendent of Schools and State Board of Education.

AACPS SUPPORTS

- Legislation adopted by the General Assembly or additional regulations adopted by the PSLRB that employ a balancing test defining matters as illegal subjects of bargaining if they are outweighed by the interests of students.
- Decisions of the PSLRB being equally binding on a local county government in instances where a decision rendered by the PSLRB has adverse fiscal implications for a local board of education.

AACPS OPPOSES

- Legislation that authorizes the PSLRB to seek injunctive relief from the circuit courts to enforce compliance and, in the absence of a stay, a local board of education's orders to be self-enforcing.
- Legislation that authorizes a local school board and an employee organization to use an alternative procedure to renegotiate the funds allocated for a negotiated agreement.
- Legislation that establishes the appellate court venue for the PSLRB.
- Legislation that authorizes the Governor to appoint the chairperson for the PSLRB.
- Legislation or decisions of the PSLRB that limit or compromise the authority and responsibility of the State Board of Education and local boards of education to establish education policy.

LEGISLATED CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENTS

Oftentimes, the Maryland General Assembly considers legislation to dictate and mandate public school curriculum. Attempts to legislate curriculum only weakens the effectiveness of the entire educational program, which is contrary to the interest of our students and the obligation of school systems. The State Board of Education and local boards of education have been delegated the responsibility for the development of curriculum and student assessments. The State Board established State standards and graduation requirements; and local boards implement locally developed curriculum to ensure that State standards are met and students are prepared to meet graduation requirements. In this way, the State, local boards of education, and educators collaborate to ensure that all students, schools, and school systems are held accountable for their work.

The authority to establish curriculum and assessments is the domain of the State Board of Education and the local boards of education, the same entities charged with the responsibility to research, investigate, and evaluate both curriculum and assessments. Maintaining this authority with the State Board and local boards allows local boards of education to collaborate with the State and stakeholders to ensure that all students, schools, and school systems are held accountable.

AACPS SUPPORTS

- Local decision-making authority in developing curriculum, assessments, and instructional programs in collaboration with the State Board of Education
- Adequate State funding to support the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program, any other mandated assessment programs, and related technology costs.
- Flexibility in the format and options for assessment of special education students and English language learners.
- Adequate funding for computer science classes throughout the Pre-K-12 program.

AACPS OPPOSES

- Efforts by the General Assembly to legislate local public school curriculum or assessments.
- Legislation aimed at restricting or controlling the quality, quantity, or necessity of locally administered assessments.

LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD AUTHORITY AND GOVERNANCE

Local governance by boards of education is essential to a comprehensive system of public education. Retaining local board authority allows for collaboration and cooperative planning within the local community rather than through top-down decisions from the State. In fact, Maryland law states, “educational matters that affect the counties shall be under the control of a county board of education,” and that local boards of education, “determine, with the advice of the county Superintendent, the educational policies of the county school system.” As decisions are made on the local level, local boards of education receive and rely on public input and are best able to address local needs. The relationship between neighborhoods and local public schools encourages participation by parents/guardians and other community members in the educational process so that everyone has a responsibility for and ownership of public education. Retaining decision-making authority at the local level allows local boards of education to best balance educational practices, available resources to implement those practices, public input, and accountability.

AACPS SUPPORTS

- Local control of educational policy, curriculum, budgets, and administration.
- Authorizing the State Superintendent of Schools, in measuring standards specified in the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act, to permit a local board’s strategic plan to continue to serve as its comprehensive master plan and to submit annual updates thereto.
- Beginning a dialogue with other school districts and education advocates to consider whether there is any policy reason for local county councils and commissioners to retain statutory authority to approve school system budgets.

AACPS OPPOSES

- Legislative, executive, or agency actions and proposals that reduce or circumscribe local board authority or create unfunded mandates.
- Efforts to change the appointment authority for local superintendents of schools or interference with a local board of education’s authority to negotiate a contract with its superintendent.
- Legislation or executive action which circumscribes the authority of local school boards to determine the parameters of the school calendar and school start and dismissal times.
- Legislative or regulatory initiatives that reduce local board governance or budgetary authority.
- Legislative proposals that would authorize local government involvement in the appointment and operation of local boards of education and the Office of the Superintendent.



MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT

The Maryland General Assembly passed legislation providing for “Maintenance of Effort” (MOE) funding of education by local governments to ensure that all students receive the base funding needed for their education, notwithstanding the economic climate. This law is consistent with the obligation to provide a free and adequate public education under the Constitution of Maryland.

Current law also strengthens and enhances the required local government funding level by, among other things, placing the penalty for failing to meet MOE on the local government – where it belongs – and not on the local school system. In addition, the law authorizes the State to withhold the required MOE deficiency amount from a county’s local income tax revenues.

The law reinforces the crucial importance of MOE as discussed in a 2009 Opinion of the Attorney General, “by requiring a minimum level of local funding, [the MOE requirement] ensures that State policy decisions to improve public education through enhanced financial support are not defeated by local funding decisions.” *See 94 Opinions of the Attorney General at 177-201.*

AACPS SUPPORTS

- The MOE law enacted in 2012 which provides a legally enforceable minimum amount of local funding, allows for multiple exceptions and waivers, and provides reasonable State and local mechanisms to increase education funding.
- The current waiver process, in which the State Board of Education reviews and decides on a local government’s request for a waiver of the MOE requirement, on a case-by-case basis. This process provides for accountability of local governments resolved on not funding MOE.

AACPS OPPOSES

- Any legislative change that would permit local governments to fund school systems without regard to MOE or to grant a “blanket” waiver of MOE.
- Legislation that would permit the Anne Arundel County Executive to submit a request for a waiver without the advance approval or concurrence of the Anne Arundel County Council and Board of Education.
- Legislation that would allow local governments to forego the waiver process when failing to meet MOE obligations and, thereby, engage in a further reduction in local education funding that is inconsistent with the 2012 law.
- Legislation that would provide greater control of the school budget to local governments.

PUBLIC SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

The Board of Education of Anne Arundel County strongly supports adequate funding and the development of adequate and equitable State and federal programs to assist localities with public school construction, renovation, and major maintenance projects. The 21st Century School Facilities Commission, established in 2016, was charged with multiple responsibilities, including (1) identifying areas where innovative financing mechanisms can be used for construction; (2) determining areas for efficiencies and cost-saving measures for construction and maintenance; and (3) reviewing the relationship between State agencies and local governments. The Commission released its final report in December 2017, which included five major conclusions and 36 recommendations. In 2018, the General Assembly passed the 21st Century School Facilities Act, which made comprehensive changes to school construction funding and approval processes that were based largely on the recommendations of the commission. The Act (1) altered the name, composition, and role of Interagency Committee on School Construction; (2) required periodic public school facilities assessments; (3) streamlined the State approval process for school construction projects; (4) established an annual goal that at least \$400 million for public school construction be provided as soon as practicable; and (5) included a requirement that \$10 million for school safety improvements be provided beginning in fiscal 2019.

AACPS SUPPORTS

- Adequate funding for the Public School Construction Program.
- Identification of a stable State source of public school construction funding.
- Ongoing support and annual funding of the State's Aging Schools Program.
- State and local sharing of the significant capital improvement costs that have resulted from mandated all-day kindergarten and prekindergarten for economically disadvantaged 4-year olds.
- State and local sharing or State assumption of architectural, engineering, and site development costs associated with planning and designing school construction and renovation projects.
- State and local sharing or State assumption of costs associated with school building alarms, cameras, fencing, and security technology, thereby freeing school system resources to address their core mission — student achievement.
- Expansion of the State's bonding capacity to meet the school construction needs of school districts in Maryland.
- Raising the threshold amount of State funding that triggers prevailing wage requirements from 25 percent to 50 percent.
- An increase in the allocation for Anne Arundel County the next time the State and local cost-share formula for eligible costs of approved projects is reviewed by the Interagency Committee on School Construction, so as to evaluate Anne Arundel County in a more equitable manner commensurate with similar jurisdictions such as Howard and Frederick counties.
- Development of a plan by Anne Arundel County to provide sufficient funds to eliminate the backlog of school construction and maintenance projects over the next 10 years.
- Maintaining local control over the prioritization and scope of school construction projects.
- Federal funding assistance to State and local governments to offset school facility related costs and construction needs being driven by the continued expansion of Fort George G. Meade and the National Security Agency.



PUBLIC SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

AACPS OPPOSES

- New State initiatives that need funding from the Public School Construction Program.
- Changes to State law that increase school system's business expenses related to school construction.
- State- or county-mandated school sizes or designs for elementary, middle, or high schools.
- Proposals which limit local authority over school facility prioritization, design, construction, procurement, maintenance, or operations.



RETIREMENT AND PENSION

As envisioned through passage of the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act, the teacher retirement program should remain a State-funded categorical program. Enhancements to the program should be considered. Given the fact that Maryland's statewide pension system is attractive to teachers and is helpful in recruitment at a time when our State institutions of higher education are graduating far fewer teacher candidates than needed to fill statewide vacancies. The ability of any one district to attract and retain teachers, though, should not be negatively impacted by a district's need to set aside monies to pay for retirement costs.

In 2011, the Governor and General Assembly made sweeping changes to the State teacher retirement system for all current and future employees, and imposed upon local school districts new annual fees to pay the State Retirement Agency for administrative costs to process benefits for our employees.

In 2012, new law shifted the normal costs of teachers pensions from the State to the local boards of education while maintaining the State Pension System over a 4-year period, with the local boards ultimately responsible for 100 percent of the costs beginning in FY 2016. An annual increase in required county maintenance of effort (MOE) payments was made to offset this additional fiscal obligation. However, that MOE obligation has not accounted for the increased financial responsibility related to pensions on local school systems and thus, has created a gap in funding to local boards of education.

AACPS SUPPORTS

- Additional financial support from the State and counties for local school systems to offset the additional financial obligations associated with the increased pension costs for local school systems.

AACPS OPPOSES

- Additional legislation to adversely revise the retirement systems or increase the fiscal imposition upon local jurisdictions.
- Legislation or efforts that would decouple the funding of the teacher pension cost shift from the required county MOE payments.
- Legislation that would change the State pension system from a defined benefit system to a defined contribution system.



SCHOOL AND STUDENT SAFETY

Safety in public schools remains increasingly important to local boards of education as school-related security incidents and threats in Maryland and throughout the nation have increased over the years. As a result, it is essential for educational leaders to be included in the continued development of a comprehensive security plan. The pursuit of a safe school environment must be tempered by a balanced emphasis on the protection of individual student rights. In 2018, the General Assembly passed the Maryland Safe to Learn Act following the tragic shootings at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida and Great Mills High School in St. Mary's County. The Maryland Safe to Learn Act (1) establishes a School Safety Subcabinet; (2) requires school systems to designate a certified school safety coordinator and conduct annual safety evaluations at schools; (3) requires school systems to designate a mental health services coordinator and local assessment teams; (4) requires school resources officers (SROs) and school safety and security personnel to complete a specialized curriculum and requires school systems to report on schools with assigned SROs; and (5) provides initial funding for school facility upgrades and security programs.

AACPS SUPPORTS

- Legislation and program initiatives that contribute to the safety and well-being of students in school and in the community.
- Legislation that mandates the automation of the Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) processing of required criminal history checks, and funding that enables CJIS and local school systems to move forward with this effort.
- Legislation that requires school system employees to self-report to their supervisors, with appropriate documentation, all charges, arrests, and convictions for criminal offenses.
- Measures, including increased funding to local departments of social services, to improve the process by which the Department of Human Services notifies school systems of an indicated finding of child abuse or neglect against a school system employee or applicant.
- State and local sharing or State assumption of costs associated with security improvements, including school building alarms, cameras, and security technology, thereby freeing school system resources to address their core mission— student achievement.
- Legislation that eliminates impediments to communication among school system, law enforcement, and juvenile justice officials.
- Incentive funding for local school systems to help ensure safe and orderly school environments through effective programs, professional development, and support services for staff, including restorative practices and positive behavioral interventions and supports, which help to effectively and appropriately administer discipline and other proactive initiatives at the local school level.
- Expansion of the definition of “person in position of authority” in Maryland law to encompass part-time, temporary, and contract employees of public and private schools as it relates to prosecution for sex offenses against minors.
- Federal and State grants and capital improvement programs to fund necessary security infrastructure enhancements such as security hardware and crime prevention elements in school construction and renovation.
- Legislation that eliminates impediments to communication among school systems, law enforcement, and juvenile services officials to help ensure school safety and provide appropriate resources for students.



SCHOOL AND STUDENT SAFETY

AACPS OPPOSES

- Legislation that incorporates a “one size fits all” philosophy or unduly limits the authority of school systems to provide a school environment conducive to teaching and learning.
- Legislation that attempts to address student safety concerns, but creates unfunded mandates on local boards of education.
- Legislation proposed as “quick fixes” or “Band Aid” solutions such as initiatives that would authorize school personnel to carry handguns on school property, permit electronic control devices to be used in schools, or mandate a School Resource Officer in every school, even if the proposal does not divert funding from Pre-K–12 education.



SPECIAL EDUCATION

The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires school systems to provide numerous special education services to students with disabilities to ensure that they receive a free appropriate public education. When IDEA was enacted, the federal government promised to fund 40 percent of the additional cost of educating children with disabilities. Adequate funding from the federal government is necessary to assist local school systems with meeting the needs of all of our students. The State of Maryland has provided some special education funding through weighted per pupil formulas via the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act, which has helped local boards of education meet the needs of special education students. To date, however, the federal government has never funded more than 20 percent of this additional cost. Local boards of education place a high priority on ensuring that special education students have access to high quality programs and instruction to meet their unique needs — federal and State support is vital to accomplish this.

In 2017, the General Assembly passed several special education laws which will have a significant impact on Maryland school systems. New State laws include, the requirement that an individualized education program (IEP) team obtain the written consent of a parent if it proposes certain actions; reporting requirements on specialized intervention services provided by school system; and parental consent. Unfunded mandates recently enacted by the General Assembly have negatively impacted the school system's ability to adequately fund the educational needs of special education students.

AACPS BELIEVES

- All students are entitled to challenging instruction from highly qualified professionals that addresses their unique learning needs and differences.
- Collaboration with families is essential to the success of all students.
- All students should be afforded the opportunity to participate in challenging educational experiences that expand outcomes after graduation.

AACPS SUPPORTS

- Recommendations of educational professionals regarding participation in programs that provide the best opportunities to support and accelerate achievement for students with disabilities.
- High expectations and accountability for all students.
- Maintaining the State's share of the total costs for nonpublic placements of students.
- Significant increases in federal funding to support high quality special education programs, services, and transportation.
- Measures limiting litigation costs to school systems, including the payment of attorney and expert witness fees resulting from formal dispute resolution processes and prohibiting including attorney fees for participation in the IEP team processes.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

AACPS OPPOSES

- Legislative or regulatory actions that result in increased litigation fees resulting from formal dispute resolution and the payment of attorneys participating in IEP team proceedings.
- Expansion of the categories under which a student is eligible to receive the protections and services under IDEA.



STUDENT NUTRITION AND HEALTH

Local boards of education place a very high priority on providing school facilities, school meals, and programs of instruction designed to promote the physical and behavioral health and fitness of students and to prepare them to maintain a healthy lifestyle as adults.

Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) recognizes the importance of developing a healthy school environment, which promotes student health, well-being, and the ability to learn. Healthy school environments meet nutrition standards and guidelines for food and beverages available on the school campus in accordance with federal regulations which promote food comprised of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein. These State and federal requirements, in conjunction with locally developed and implemented policies, appropriately ensure that public schools meet the nutritional needs of students. For example, the Maryland Meals for Achievement in-classroom breakfast program, in which 49 AACPS schools participate, has been credited with improving academics, behavior, and the well-being of students. This program provides all students at eligible schools with a free breakfast.

AACPS also recognizes the importance of promoting the positive mental health of all students through the development of impactful relationships and by teaching resilience. School counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, pupil personnel workers, and school nurses collaborate with staff, parents, and the community to overcome barriers to learning. Our emphasis on multi-tiered systems of support and restorative practices further supports this effort and supports our school system's Strategic Plan emphasizing relationships, rigor and readiness for all students. By removing barriers, providing resources, and teaching appropriate social-emotional skills, students gain the tools to be productive citizens.

AACPS SUPPORTS

- State and federal requirements, in conjunction with locally developed and implemented policies, to ensure that public schools meet the nutritional needs of the students.
- Continued funding of the Maryland Meals for Achievement Program.
- Funding for training and mental health supports for students.
- Funding for additional school-based mental health positions.

AACPS OPPOSES

- Legislation or efforts to limit the authority of the local school board to set policy related to school nutrition and health.
- Amendments to State law that increase the school system's business expenses related to food and nutrition services.
- Legislation or regulations requiring the tracking or reporting of single ingredient information or nutrients outside of what is required by the United States Department of Agriculture and Maryland State Department of Education.

TEACHERS AND INSTRUCTIONAL PERSONNEL

AACPS remains committed to elevating all students and eliminating all gaps. We recognize the educational benefits of a diverse workforce that enriches the education experience of all AACPS students. We can accomplish this by investing in the development of highly effective teachers and leaders that reflect our diversity. We recognize individuals who use student data, reflect on their practice and engage in professional learning as highly effective educators. Such educators enhance their knowledge and skills to increase student learning in their classrooms, at their schools, and in our school district.

AACPS teachers are valued as leaders and actively participate in making decisions that impact teaching and learning at the school level. We are proud of our teacher workforce and value them as a critical asset in contributing to student academic achievement. The Board of Education of Anne Arundel County believes that the quality of education is directly dependent on the quality of the teaching force, which is directly impacted by the school system's ability to recruit and retain high-quality educators.

AACPS SUPPORTS

- Increases in federal and State support for recruitment efforts that include partnering with business and institutions of higher education and community experts via adjunct professor routes to standard exploration of unique fields.
- Increases in federal and State support for teacher salaries to aid in the recruitment and retention of highly qualified teaching personnel, particularly where increased credential requirements may accelerate local wage market pressures.
- Additional federal and State support for residential teacher programs or other alternative certifications to aid in the recruitment and retention of career changers with a passion to educate future leaders in specialty and hard to fill areas; propelling them to career opportunities recognized in business, such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, computer science, and special education.
- Programs emphasizing competitive salaries and professional work environments to attract and retain highly qualified teachers, with special emphasis on a diverse workforce.
- The goal of a highly qualified teacher in every classroom and flexibility to establish alternative entry routes into teaching to assist localities in hiring qualified persons, including career-changers, not formally prepared for teaching careers.
- Enticements, initiatives, and other measures designed to make it easier and more affordable for teachers and other educators to purchase homes in Anne Arundel County, thus being closer to and more involved in the communities in which they work.

AACPS OPPOSES

- Establishment of any challenge grant or bonus system that obligates AACPS to fund said grant or bonus from local funding sources.
- Unattainable State standards that make it difficult to hire quality educators.
- Unfunded mandates requiring local school systems to increase salaries without State funding.



TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Local boards of education are responsible for providing funding for transportation to students within their school systems. Over the years, local school systems' responsibilities for transporting students have significantly expanded due to additional costs associated with the transporting of special education, nonpublic placement and homeless students. Operational expenses associated with fuel costs and labor shortages have also contributed to this increased cost.

Although the State provides some funding for transportation, this funding does not increase sufficiently from year to year to cover increasing enrollments as well as the increasing costs of obtaining and maintaining school buses.

AACPS SUPPORTS

- Full funding for the student transportation provisions of the Bridge to Excellence Act in Public Schools Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Every Student Succeeds Act, and McKinney-Vento Act so that increases in public school transportation costs do not prevent local boards from meeting other funding responsibilities.
- State and local funding for student transportation sufficient to support any expanded student transportation responsibilities and costs arising from federal and State mandates.
- Efforts to secure adequate funding to enable local school systems to ensure student safety according to industry standards.

AACPS OPPOSES

- Legislation proposing new unfunded safety mandates such as seatbelts on school buses.



VOUCHERS, TUITION TAX CREDITS, TAX DEDUCTIONS, AND TEXTBOOKS

The Board of Education of Anne Arundel County opposes the diversion of public education funds to nonpublic schools. We specifically oppose the use of tuition tax credits, tax deductions, or vouchers as a means of reimbursing parents/guardians for their children's nonpublic educational expenses in Pre-K–12.

AACPS BELIEVES

- The diversion of public education funds to nonpublic schools is likely to have serious economic, constitutional, legal, and public policy consequences. If public education funds were used for the support of nonpublic schools, fewer resources would be available for public elementary and secondary schools.
- The diversion of public education funds to nonpublic schools would impede the ability of localities to ensure an appropriate, safe, and equitable education for all students. Further, students in schools with limited parental/guardian and community support would be disadvantaged. Unlike public schools, private schools have no direct accountability to taxpayers for their use of tax revenues.
- All taxpayers enjoy the same benefits of an educated citizenry. As such, we, as Marylanders, have a responsibility to support the public education system.

AACPS SUPPORTS

- Strong public accountability measures for every public education dollar spent, particularly funding utilized for nonpublic school purposes.
- Application of public school academic accountability standards, legal, and regulatory requirements to all nonpublic schools receiving public education funds.

AACPS OPPOSES

- Aid to private schools in any manner, whether through textbooks, transportation, technology purchases, or any other means.
- Any use of public school funding that does not support public school education.
- State tax credits to individuals or corporations that donate funds to charitable organizations that provide scholarship programs to students attending private and parochial schools.
- Diversion of Pre-K–12 funding towards community colleges or other institutions of higher education.



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ANNE ARUNDEL
COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ELEVATING ALL STUDENTS ... ELIMINATING ALL GAPS
