



December 22, 2021

The Honorable Bill Ferguson
President, Maryland State Senate
H-107 State House
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Adrienne Jones
Speaker, Maryland House of Delegates
H-101, State House
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: 2021 School Enrollment Counts

Dear President Ferguson and Speaker Jones:

As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic has left our public schools in the precarious situation of balancing public health with quality education. Many Maryland families turned to other options for schooling during the pandemic for a variety of reasons. Many of them are now slowly returning to our schools.

The mix of hybrid in-person/virtual schooling, temporary independent homeschooling, and general inconsistency in attendance during the pandemic has resulted in lower enrollment than predicted for this year and last. Enrollment plays a crucial role in school funding formulas in Maryland, with even temporarily reduced enrollments resulting in decreased State funding for Local Education Agencies (LEAs). It is important to note that while enrollment may decrease, fixed costs such as utilities and personnel costs do not have the same corresponding reduction, leaving LEAs to carry those fixed costs. As you can imagine, this is of great concern for LEAs and counties as we prepare our budgets and an expected return to full, post-pandemic in-person learning for next school year.

During the 2021 legislative session, under your leadership, the General Assembly recognized the unfortunate position counties and LEAs found themselves in regarding enrollment and school funding. Ultimately, the Legislature passed special provisions to “skip” the September 2020 enrollment count – a move that counties and LEAs found helpful in maintaining realistic school funding formulas. Notably, Governor Hogan also moved to address the issue and “held schools harmless” for the circumstantial decline in enrollment.

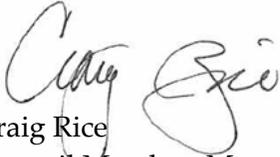
Accordingly, the Education Subcommittee of the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Legislative Committee, the Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland (PSSAM), and the Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) ask that you consider a similar solution during the 2022 legislative session. In doing so, counties and LEAs will not be collaterally punished for the unusual circumstances of the pandemic. Additionally, we request that you help craft a similar solution by holding the overall Comp Ed funding to LEAs harmless. Last year the US Department of Agriculture allowed LEAs to “carryover” their FARMS enrollment numbers from the 2019-2020 school year, recognizing that asking families to complete the forms would be nearly impossible due to the

pandemic and virtual learning. Unfortunately, this year they did not extend the same exemption and LEAs are reporting significant losses across all of the special populations, but most notably for the Comp Ed students. As you are well aware, these are the students and families hit the hardest during the pandemic and suffering the most learning loss. While we cannot change the Department of Agriculture's decision, we are hoping you can work with us on a solution to hold this overall funding harmless, regardless of the actual enrollment for one additional year.

The pandemic has taken a toll on all students, schools, and communities. Once schools are back to "normal," Maryland's counties and LEAs must be prepared to thrive and be successful, but because of the unusual school enrollment projects, many are likely to be in a difficult financial position. Addressing this critical issue now benefits all of Maryland's students, schools, and families – and helps us get back to serving Maryland's students the best we can.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Craig Rice
Council Member, Montgomery County
Chair, MACo Education Subcommittee



Jack Wilson
Commissioner, Queen Anne's County
Vice Chair, MACo Education Subcommittee
Secretary, MACo



Dr. Patricia W. Saelens
President, PSSAM
Superintendent, Queen Anne's County
Public Schools



Virginia McGraw
President, MABE
Vice Chairperson, Charles County School
Board

CC: The Honorable Larry Hogan, Governor of Maryland

Comp Ed Projected Funding Losses

	Enrollment FY '22	Appropriation	Enrollment FY '23	Expected Appropriation	Funding Loss
Montgomery*	46,660	\$133,783,552	39,050	\$111,964,160	\$21,819,392
Anne Arundel	26,093	\$74,813,850	22,181	\$65,619,383	\$9,194,467
Worcester+	2,730	\$7,827,456	2,702	\$7,747,174	\$80,282

*FY 2023 expected state appropriation for comp ed is a very rough estimate.

+Using estimated FY23 Comp Ed revenue on same per pupil amount as FY22.

Harford County

FY22 FaRM's enrollment 10,815

FY23 FaRM's enrollment 9,778

Scenario #1 assumes Comp Ed per pupil amount is the same as FY22

FY22 Comp Ed allocation \$35,891,466

FY23 Comp Ed Estimate \$34,271,388

Potential Loss **\$1,620,078**

Scenario #2 Assumes the DLS estimated FY23 Comp Ed per pupil amounts

FY23 Comp Ed allocation using FY23 FaRM's enrollment of 9,778, (which we know is low) = \$34,271,388

FY23 Comp Ed Estimate using FY23 FaRM's enrollment staying flat at FY22 counts 10,815 = \$37,906,020

Potential loss **\$3,634,632**