



Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children

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## Position Statement on Kirwan Commission Recommendations

*Issued January 2020*

### Position

*The Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children (MDAEOYC) supports the Kirwan Commission's recommendations for comprehensive education reform to build a world-class education system in Maryland, as outlined in the Commission's January 2019 Interim Report.*

*MDAEOYC supports the recommendations of the Kirwan Commission in all five policy areas: (1) early childhood education, (2) high-quality and diverse teachers and leaders, (3) college and career readiness pathways, (4) more resources to ensure all students are successful, and (5) governance and accountability.*

*The Commission's early childhood education recommendations include prekindergarten expansion. MDAEOYC supports the Kirwan Commission's recommendations on expanding pre-K. The recommendations:*

- 1. Maintain Maryland's mixed-delivery approach to providing pre-K through public schools and community-based programs such as child care centers or private schools. In 2021, a minimum of 30 percent of pre-K program slots<sup>1</sup> will be provided in community-based programs. By 2025, a minimum of 50 percent of pre-K program slots will be provided in community-based programs.*
- 2. Expand access to public pre-K for children and families in Maryland. Pre-K is provided at no cost for all low-income families, and on a sliding fee scale (paying partial cost) for middle-income families.*
- 3. Provide pre-K that meets high standards of quality, including teachers with bachelor's degrees and State certification in early childhood education, and developmentally appropriate instruction and curricula.*

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<sup>1</sup> program "slots" means openings, or classroom seats, for individual children in the program

## Background

The [Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education](#) (known as the Kirwan Commission) was established by the Governor and the General Assembly to review and make recommendations for Maryland's education system. The Kirwan Commission began meeting in 2016, and issued several reports summarizing its recommendations. The most recent report from the Kirwan Commission is the [January 2019 Interim Report](#).<sup>2</sup>

The Kirwan Commission's report makes recommendations in five policy areas:

1. Early Childhood Education;
2. High-quality and Diverse Teachers and Leaders;
3. College and Career Readiness Pathways;
4. More Resources to Ensure All Students Are Successful;
5. Governance and Accountability.

## Legislative History

**2019 Session:** Portions of the Kirwan Commission's recommendations were enacted in the 2019 legislative session via [Senate Bill 1030](#), The Blueprint for Maryland's Future. SB 1030 began implementation of the Kirwan recommendations in six targeted program areas (concentration of poverty grants, full-day pre-K funding, teacher salary grants, mental health coordinator funding, struggling learner grants, and special education funding), funded over three years at a cost of \$1.1 billion.

**2020 Session:** Legislation is anticipated in the 2020 session to implement the Commission recommendations and provide associated funding.

## Detailed Summary of the Kirwan Commission's Early Childhood Education Recommendations

The early childhood education recommendations in the January 2019 Kirwan Commission report consist of the following:

- Expand full-day pre-K;
- Support capacity-building for new and current programs;
- Implement a school readiness assessment for all students entering kindergarten; and
- Expand Judy Centers, Family Support Centers, and the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program.

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<sup>2</sup> [Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education](#). (2019, January). *Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education: Interim Report*. Annapolis MD: Department of Legislative Services.

## Expand Full-day Pre-K

- Who is eligible: pre-K is provided:
  - At no cost for four-year-olds and three-year-olds from families with incomes up to 300% of the federal poverty level (FPL) (approximately \$75,000 for a family of four); and
  - On a sliding fee scale for four-year-olds from families with incomes between 300% and 600% FPL (approximately \$75,000 to \$150,000 for a family of four).
- Who provides pre-K services:
  - Publicly-funded pre-K will be provided by public schools and by community-based organizations.
- Participating programs must be high-quality, publicly funded pre-K programs.
  - This is defined as an early learning program that includes structural elements that are evidence-based and nationally recognized as important for ensuring program quality.
  - Programs must include, at a minimum:
    - Phasing in high staff qualifications, including:
      - Teachers with a State certification for teaching in early childhood education, or a bachelor's degree in any field pursuing a state-approved alternative teacher preparation pathway (MAAPP); and
      - Teaching assistants who have at least a Child Development Associate certificate or an associate's degree.
    - High-quality professional development for all staff;
    - A child-to-instructional-staff ratio of no more than 10 to 1;
    - A class size of no more than 20, with, at minimum, one teacher with high staff qualifications outlined above;
    - A full-day (6.5 hour) program;
    - Inclusion of children with disabilities to ensure access to and full participation in all opportunities;
    - Developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and evidence-based curricula, and learning environments that are aligned with the State Early Learning and Development Standards, for at least the year prior to kindergarten entry;
    - Individualized accommodations and supports so that all children can access and participate fully in learning activities;
    - Instructional staff salaries that are comparable to local K-12 instructional staff salaries;

- Program evaluation to ensure continuous improvement;
    - On-site or accessible comprehensive services for children and community partnerships that promote families' access to services that support children's learning and development; and
    - Evidence-based health and safety standards.
  - Programs providing pre-K must also meet quality standards through an EXCELS rating:
    - Community providers must publish at least a level 3 rating on EXCELS, with a plan to achieve level 5 within five years.
    - Public school-based pre-K programs must publish at least a level 4 rating on EXCELS with a plan to achieve level 5 within five years.
    - Beginning in year 5 (2025), all new pre-K programs must publish at EXCELS level 5 to participate.
- Additional details:
  - This will be phased in over a 10-year timeframe, 2021 - 2030.
  - Family enrollment is voluntary.
  - Full-day pre-K is defined on a school-day basis, for a minimum of 6.5 hours per day for at least 180 school days.
  - The provider may not engage in explicitly religious activities during the portion of the school day supported with public pre-K funds.
  - Income-eligible families will have access to extended day services (before and after care) through the State's child care subsidy program.
- Pre-K phase-in schedule: the Commission offers this as a potential phase-in schedule, recognizing that local jurisdictions may phase in full-day pre-K on a faster schedule.
  - Pre-k in community-based settings: there is a requirement that a minimum percentage of pre-K slots be in community-based settings. By year 5 (2025), a minimum of 50% of pre-K slots will be provided in community-based settings.
  - Serving low-income four-year-olds: by year 4, all four-year-olds in families with incomes below 300% of the federal poverty level will be offered full-day pre-K.
  - Serving low-income three-year-olds: expanding full-day pre-K to three-year-olds is phased in more gradually, with all offered full-day pre-K by year 10.
  - Serving middle-income four-year olds: full-day pre-K is offered on a sliding fee scale basis to families with incomes between 300% and 600% of the federal poverty level.
  - For additional details, see Table, page 6, excerpted from the Kirwan Commission's January 2019 Interim Report, page 40.

## Support Capacity-Building for New and Current Programs

- The State will encourage pre-K programs to invest in helping teachers to become certified in early childhood education.
- The State will offer increased coaching and technical assistance through child care resource and referral agencies and through EXCELS to support community providers in improving the quality of their programs.
- The State will support support ECE staff and teachers in attaining CDA credentials, associate's degrees and bachelor's degrees, including tuition assistance and financial support to help cover tuition, course, and exam fees and coaching by mentor teachers.
- Public pre-K teachers will be part of the Maryland K-12 teacher career ladder.

## Implement a school readiness assessment for all students entering kindergarten

- The State will use the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) or a successor assessment.
- The assessment will be administered to every kindergarten student as a census
- The assessment tool will not be cumbersome for teachers to administer and teachers will be given time to administer the assessment during the school day.
- The assessment should be racial and culturally unbiased, and used for diagnostic purposes, curriculum development and early detection of learning challenges.

## Expand Judy Centers, Family Support Centers, and the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program

These investments will help provide and coordinate access to education and support services for at-risk children ages 0-5 and their families.

- The State will expand the number of Judy Centers over time, with the goal of matching the number of Title I elementary schools. Judy Centers coordinate and provide services for young children and families located in the neediest communities. 135 new Judy Centers will be opened by 2030.
- The State will expand the number of Family Support Centers over time, with the goal of ensuring every underserved neighborhood has a Family Support Center or similar set of programs and services. 30 new Family Support Centers will be opened by 2030.
- The State will increase funding for the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program that provides support to families with children with developmental delays and special needs.

Exhibit 4.1 Potential Publicly Funded Prekindergarten Phase-in Schedule

|                                     | 1                                | 2   | 3                                      | 4                                      | 5   | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10   |  |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|--|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|                                     | FY20                             | FY21                                      | FY22                                   | FY23                                   | FY24  | FY25   | FY26   | FY27   | FY28   | FY29   | FY30   |
| 4-year-olds                         | All below 185% FPL offered ½ day | 25% of half-day slots convert to full day | 50% half-day slots convert to full day | 75% half-day slots convert to full day | All below 300% FPL offered full day. <b>Sliding scale for families between 300% and 600% FPL.</b> | All below 300% FPL offered full day. Sliding scale for families between 300% and 600% FPL. | All below 300% FPL offered full day. Sliding scale for families between 300% and 600% FPL. | All below 300% FPL offered full day. Sliding scale for families between 300% and 600% FPL. | All below 300% FPL offered full day. Sliding scale for families between 300% and 600% FPL. | All below 300% FPL offered full day. Sliding scale for families between 300% and 600% FPL. | All below 300% FPL offered full day. Sliding scale for families between 300% and 600% FPL. |
| 3-year-olds                         | None required                    | 10% below 300% FPL offered full day       | 20% below 300% FPL offered full day    | 30% below 300% FPL offered full day    | 40% below 300% FPL offered full day   | 50% below 300% FPL offered full day  | 60% below 300% FPL offered full day  | 70% below 300% FPL offered full day  | 80% below 300% FPL offered full day  | 90% below 300% FPL offered full day  | All below 300% FPL offered full day  |
| Community-based (3- or 4-year-olds) | None required                    | Min 30% in community-based settings       | Min 35% in community-based settings    | Min 40% in community-based settings    | Min 45% in community-based settings   | Min 50% in community-based settings  | Min 50% in community-based settings  | Min 50% in community-based settings  | Min 50% in community-based settings  | Min 50% in community-based settings  | Min 50% in community-based settings  |

Note: This exhibit represents a potential phase-in for costing out purposes. The items bolded in blue are the only requirements that will be recommended to be codified in law. A local education agency could choose to phase in these requirements on a more aggressive timeframe. Student participation in publicly funded prekindergarten is voluntary.

| Percent of Federal Poverty Level | Approximate Income Level for Family of Four | Number of Four-year-olds (Year 5) |
|----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| 0 - 200%                         | \$0 - \$49,999                              | 24,663                            |
| 201% - 300%                      | \$50,000 - \$74,999                         | 12,733                            |
| 301% - 400%                      | \$75,000 - \$99,999                         | 9,988                             |
| 401% - 500%                      | \$100,000 - \$124,999                       | 7,836                             |
| 501% - 599%                      | \$125,000 - \$149,999                       | 5,470                             |
| 600% and above                   | \$150,000 and above                         | 13,491                            |

Source: 2018 Federal Poverty Level Guidelines, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services