

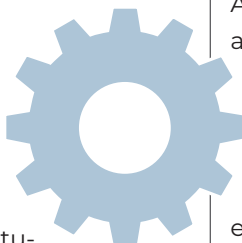
Fact/Fiction: School Funding, Kirwan, and the Blueprint for Maryland's Future

Marylanders overwhelmingly support increasing funding for public schools—and are ready to seize this once-in-a-generation opportunity during the 2020 General Assembly session to update and improve the state's school funding formula for the first time in 20 years and make sure that every student in every neighborhood has a great public school.

FACT: The vast majority of the Blueprint phase-in is already funded.

FICTION: The Blueprint would require a massive tax increase.

The Kirwan Commission has recommended that at full phase-in (10 years from now), an additional \$4 billion would be spent on public schools to expand career and technical education programs, provide more resources for students from backgrounds of poverty and students with special needs, increase educator pay, hire more educators, and more equitably fund schools.



The *Baltimore Sun* has reported that “routine growth in the state budget, through increasing population, higher salaries and housing prices, will add billions to the state’s budget for education over 10 years without additional taxes,” which will cover about 70% of the new funding formula.

The legislature—and voters—have already begun to take action to cover the remaining amount. In 2018, 89% of Marylanders voted for Question 1 to ensure that casino revenues would go to increasing school funding. This is projected to add \$500+ million per year in new school funding. And during the 2019 General Assembly session, legislators took action to comply with the Supreme Court’s Wayfair decision to collect revenue on online sales from out-of-state companies, adding millions more annually for school funding.

Unfortunately, Governor Hogan and other opponents are trying to spread deeply misleading numbers for tax increases that they purport Marylanders would see. As the *Baltimore Sun* recently reported: “The Hogan administration... combin[ed] the extra funding needed for Kirwan with the estimated effects of a possible recession and future years’ estimated budget shortfalls, for a total of \$18.7 billion. The administration then divided that among the state’s 3 million taxpayers to get an estimate of \$6,000 or more per family. The future budget shortfall is a dubious measure to use, because the state is required each year to have a balanced budget — essentially, the governor and lawmakers each year have to make adjustments to make sure a projected deficit does not materialize. ... It’s highly unlikely that every Maryland family would face a tax hike of that magnitude.”

No one, other than the governor and other opponents of increasing school funding, has ever proposed or talked about this scale of tax increases. They’re completely fictitious—and completely unnecessary.

FACT: The Blueprint invests in programs proven to work in high-performing states and countries, like expanded career and technical education, more support for struggling learners, additional resources for mental health and special education, increased educator pay, and more.

FICTION: This is just spending more money on the same things.

STRONG SCHOOLS WORK

Many states have attempted to improve their schools simply by delivering additional funding to school districts to spend as they chose. The results have been mixed.

That's not what is being proposed here in Maryland. Instead, the Kirwan Commission has spent three years incorporating into their recommendations the programs and policies that have worked in the highest-performing states and countries. Their recommendations include proven measures such as expanding career and technical education, community schools, and pre-k; increasing educator pay; hiring more educators to increase individual attention for students and to expand teacher planning and collaboration time; and providing more support for special education and mental health services.

These initiatives have moved the needle in the states and countries where they have been implemented, and the new accountability provisions in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future will make sure that they are implemented with fidelity and produce results.

FACT: The current funding formula is outdated and doesn't keep up with the needs of Maryland's students.

FICTION: Current school funding is adequate, districts should simply do a better job.

The current funding formula—commonly referred to as Thornton, after the Thornton Commission that developed it—was adopted in 2002. While Thornton funding led to significant increases in student achievement, the plan was never meant to accommodate current levels of child poverty. The percentage of Maryland public school students living in poverty has more than doubled since 1990—from 22% to 45%—putting our statewide student population on the verge of becoming

majority low-income. When you consider those increased needs together with the higher standards and new programs implemented over the last five years alone, our current levels of education spending fall short for too many students.

Illustrating that need, in one of its first meetings, the Kirwan Commission received a report from national school funding experts identifying an annual funding shortfall of \$2.9 billion statewide as of the 2015 school year. That's about \$2 million per school.

Not only is current funding not adequate, it's also not equitable. In 2015, 53% of black students in Maryland attended school districts that were underfunded by 15% or more, compared to only 8% of white students. Analysts have also found that Maryland spends 5% less on schools serving students living in poverty.

It's clear—it's time to make sure that funding for Maryland public schools is adequate, equitable, and sustainable.

