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MSDE Headquarters

Maryland State Department of Education

Response to the Analyst's Review and Recommendations

House Education & Economic Development Subcommittee –
February 10, 2016

Senate Education, Business & Administration Subcommittee –
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The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) welcomes this opportunity to share with the Committee some of its success stories and to address questions raised by the analyst.

Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

Therefore, the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) recommends language to restrict funding until the submission of a report to the budget committees on the ways that LBPH plans to leverage its new positions to expand its outreach programs, increase access to its materials, and enhance the services that it provides. This will give the budget committees the opportunity to review and determine if new personnel is the most effective use of the mandated LBPH funding to support its mission in fiscal 2017 and in the out-years.

MSDE respectfully disagrees with the recommended language, preferring to provide the information in this response.

This Agency believes that the Governor's proposed budget strikes a good balance between staffing and non-salary costs. Given the nature of this program, it should be expected that a significant portion of the budget be dedicated to staffing.

The fiscal 2017 mandated funding for LBPH represents a net increase from FY 2015 of approximately \$2.43 million in total funds. Of this increase, approximately \$548,000 will be used to support 14 positions - (converting six existing contractual positions and creating eight new positions). Therefore, about \$1.8 million of the new funds will be available to augment the programs and services provided by LBPH.

The additional funding and staff will enable LBPH to increase its capacity to reach more of the 100,000 eligible Maryland citizens, publicize the unique services available and improve the customer service provided to existing patrons.

LBPH outreach services will be expanded with four new positions assisting the current coordinator. The new positions will provide specialized services to eligible children, increase existing services to library patrons through the ability to train and organize more than 50 volunteers and a coordinated approach to available services, including those at other agencies.

LBPH will be able to conduct needs assessments and use the data to inform programming. The Maryland Accessible Text Book (MAT) program provides textbooks and supplementary materials in alternative formats to blind and print disabled students enrolled in post-secondary education institutions. Two new positions will enable LBPH to fully implement the program – eliminating wait lists and delays in delivery of materials.

The availability of additional staff will improve the quality of front-line service to LBPH patrons. Existing staff will be able to focus efforts on improving the response time to reference questions and requests for materials and adaptive technology, and increasing the number of processed applications and circulation materials. Additionally, the reference desk will be supported 45 hours per week, an increase of 15 hours per week.

LBPH will use a partnership with the Department of General Services (DGS) to recruit and retain a dedicated maintenance mechanic. This new position will ensure the smooth operation of the facility through timely attention to the building's needs.

Current programming at LBPH will be augmented with approximately \$1.8 million in new funds. Specifically, the funds will support:

- Improved and expanded educational and cultural programming enabling LBPH patrons to receive services equal to those residents of Maryland who are able to use their local public libraries.
- Provision of critical pre-literacy programming to pre-school age children to help them acquire the necessary skills to learn to read;
- Purchase of more materials including youth service collections, Braille, large print, tactile, and audio.
- Increased critical adaptive computer training classes.
- Partnerships with the 24 public library systems and three regional library systems to establish statewide programming, outreach, and consultant activities in the area of accessible technology, online resources and reader's advisory for people with print disabilities.

PARCC Assessments

MSDE should comment on how the \$2.7 million in fiscal 2015 savings was recognized in the budget and how the estimated \$379,000 in fiscal 2016 savings will be utilized. MSDE should also comment on what savings can be estimated for fiscal 2018, the final year of the contract, considering the increases in the number of PARCC exams expected to be administered online in fiscal 2016 and 2017.

Of the \$2.7 million in savings noted in the analysis, \$2.1 million was reduced from the MSDE budget as part of the FY 2015 cost containment action. The balance was allocated for the MSA assessment closeout. Regarding the estimated savings in FY 2016, any remaining savings, along with federal funds, will be used to address the overall assessment costs.

In 2014, the State Board of Education delayed for two years the requirement that students pass English 10 and Algebra I as a graduation requirement. The Board will define the policy regarding using PARCC assessments to satisfy graduation requirements this spring. Should the Board decide to make passing the PARCC Algebra I and English 10 assessments a graduation requirement, the overall test count will increase beginning in the 2017/2018 school year (FY 2018) because some students will need to retake the assessment in order to meet the graduation requirement. MSDE expects \$200,000 in additional savings in FY 2018 due to further reductions in the number of paper based tests. However, these savings will likely be offset by an increase in the number of tests given because of re-takes.

Implementation of Transition Courses

MSDE should comment on the status of implementing transition courses as informed by the most recent implementation of PARCC.

MSDE has worked collaboratively with local superintendents, representatives from the Maryland Association of Community Colleges, and other stakeholders to create a transition program that meets the needs of all students. The primary goal of the Maryland College and Career Readiness Act of 2013 is to increase the number of students that are “college and/or career-ready” by the end of 11th grade. Recognizing this, MSDE has worked with local school systems in the creation of guidelines around College and Career Readiness (CCR) determinant assessments, transition courses, educational opportunities and the re-assessment program (in grade 12) after the transition experience to ensure students graduate high school with the skills needed to meet their post-secondary goals.

The final outcome of this work includes the following:

- Local superintendents and community colleges across Maryland agreed upon college and career assessments. While PARCC English 11 and PARCC Algebra II are two of the assessments that school districts may use, local superintendents and community colleges also agreed that school districts can use the PARCC English 10 score as a measure of college and career readiness for at least two years. Some districts have decided to census test 11th grade students using the SAT (Baltimore County) and the Accuplacer (Montgomery County).
- Local school systems have worked collaboratively with their local community colleges to provide an assessment instrument and transition program to meet the needs of the students in their respective communities. In many instances, the transition course/educational experience will be a community college developmental course taught at the high school.
- About half of the school systems will offer a separate transition course in English Language Arts/Literacy for students who have not met the college and career ready determination. The other school systems will provide instruction based upon modules that students will complete to augment coursework in grade 12.
- In Mathematics, the transition course should be the next level of mathematics that students are required to enroll in as part of the mathematics requirement found in the Maryland College and Career-Ready/College Completion Act. For example, an 11th grade student who is enrolled in Geometry and fails to meet the CCR determination will enroll in Algebra II in grade 12 and a student enrolled in Algebra II in grade 11 and fails to meet the CCR determination will enroll in pre-Calculus.
- All districts are also working with MSDE’s Division of College and Career-Readiness to offer students an opportunity to be assessed in the area of technical skills aligned to one

of six career and technical education programs that is part of the career completer program offered to students in Maryland.

Every Student Succeeds Act

MSDE should comment on how much federal funding it believes Maryland may receive through these new ESSA grants and how Maryland will utilize additional flexibility in the ESSA.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed on December 10, 2015 and the new provisions go into effect for the 2017-2018 school year. Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2016 competitive and formula funding will flow through the current ESEA construct for school year 2016-2017. In FFY 2017, funds will flow through the ESSA construct for the 2017-2018 school year.

MSDE has established an Internal ESSA Transition team that meets monthly and is establishing an ESSA Stakeholder Committee which will meet for the first time in March 2016 followed by bi-monthly meetings. These committees will be responsible for creating ESSA implementation plans for recommendation to the State Superintendent and the State Board of Education. It is anticipated that ESSA regulations will be available by November 2016 with State plans due in spring 2017.

ESSA creates a number of new grants including a new block grant in Title IV called Student Support and Academic Enrichment. These are formula grants focused on increasing the capacity of states, Local Education Agencies (LEAs), schools, and local communities to provide students with a well-rounded education, improve school conditions, and improve the use of technology. MSDE estimates that Maryland will receive approximately \$22 million under this grant.

The ESSA law includes authorization levels, and not actual appropriation. At this point, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) has not released specific information on competitive grants under ESSA. There is a flexibility pilot in Title I where LEAs can apply directly to USED. USED has not provided specific information at this time. MSDE looks forward to the release of ESSA regulations.

Adequacy Study

MSDE should provide an update to the budget committees on the progress of the study thus far and the timeline for completing the study.

The Study of Adequacy of Education Funding in Maryland is progressing on schedule. The study is using three separate methodologies to determine a per student base cost and additional weights necessary for special needs students so that all students have the resources needed to meet State standards. For two of the three methodologies – the Professional Judgment and Evidence-Based approaches, the contractor has completed the data collection process and is currently analyzing the data. The Successful Schools approach is currently in a data collection phase. Of the seven other required studies included in the RFP, five are complete. The Geographic Cost of Education Index (GCEI) report is scheduled to be completed in June 2016

and a report on the Supplemental Grants program will be integrated in the final report. MSDE and its partners, DBM and DLS continue to meet regularly with the research team as well as the Stakeholder Advisory Group, and expect the work to be completed on time, by December 1, 2016.

Juvenile Services Education Program

DLS recommends budget language requiring MSDE and DJS to submit biannual monitoring reports to the budget committees on the advancements made toward addressing the concerns raised in this issue, the level of communication between the agencies and with LSS, and how the additional resources provided in the fiscal 2017 allowance will be utilized. In addition, DLS recommends MSDE and DJS develop measures evaluating the performance of the program, in addition to student performance. Example measures could include average length of time to transition student records between a JSE school and a local school; teacher vacancy rates and length of tenure; contacts with local school system liaisons to support student transition into the community; students participating in postsecondary opportunities, etc.

MSDE concurs with the recommendation for submission of biannual collaborative reports with the Department of Juvenile Services based on mutually agreed to evaluation measures.

Education Data Systems and Evaluation

MSDE should provide information on the support that MLDS currently receives to collect and present statewide data and what resources are necessary so that MLDS may make content available for policymakers and the general public in a more efficient manner.

The MLDS Center has a strong and productive partnership with MSDE, the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), and the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR). The agencies provide the Center with timely and complete data sets as required under the Data Inventory and Data Schedule established by the MLDS Governing Board.

The challenge is linking the data across the different sectors. The quality of the data received by the MLDS Center is dependent on the sources that initially collected the data. Data entry errors or failure to enter critical data fields result in data quality issues that can affect the accuracy of the reporting done by the MLDS Center. Further, because the data that MLDS received were collected by the agencies from sources for purposes other than longitudinal data reporting, in certain instances they do not include all the data values necessary to support matching across sectors or certain types of reporting. In addition, there is no consistent identifier that all agencies use that would allow easy linking. As noted in the analysis, the Center has made tremendous strides in linking student records to a postsecondary and/or workforce record. This has been time consuming work, but the current matching rate of 90% or better will allow the Center to begin increasing its reporting output.

It should also be noted that MSDE and MHEC continue to revise their data collections to facilitate even more matching and reporting capabilities. Further, MLDS Center has begun

obtaining limited data from the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) to allow the Center to improve its matching capabilities (the MVA data will prove to be especially useful in matching a high school student to a workforce record).

Finally, the Budget Analysis compared the Center's output to Washington and Virginia. Those states have been fully functional for 3 to 4 years compared to the Center's one year. The Center expects to have as much content as those other states over the next year or two.

DLS Recommended Actions:

1. Add the following language:

Provided that it is the intent of the General Assembly that no individual loaned educator be engaged by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) for more than six years. For loaned educators engaged in fiscal 2010, the time already served at MSDE may not be counted toward the six-year limit.

Further provided that it is the intent of the General Assembly that all loaned educators submit annual financial disclosure statements, as is required by State employees in similar positions.

Further provided that MSDE shall provide an annual census report on the number of loaned educator contracts and any conversion of these personnel to regular positions to the General Assembly by December 15, 2016, and every year thereafter. The annual report shall include job function, title, salary, fund source(s) for the contract, the first year of the contract, the number of years that the loaned educator has been employed by the State, and whether the educator files a financial disclosure statement. MSDE shall also provide a report to the budget committees prior to entering into any new loaned educator contract to provide temporary assistance to the State. The budget committees shall have 45 days to review and comment from the date of receipt of any report on new contracts.

MSDE concurs.

2. Add the following language to the general fund appropriation:

, provided that \$400,000 of this appropriation made for the purpose of hiring new positions for the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (LBPH) may not be expended until the Maryland State Department of Education submits a report to the budget committees on the ways LBPH plans to leverage its new positions to expand its outreach programs, access to its materials, and enhance the services it provides. This report will be submitted by September 1, 2016, and the budget committees shall have 45 days to review and comment from the date of receipt of the report. Funds restricted pending a receipt of a report may not be transferred by budget amendment or otherwise to any other purpose and shall revert to the General Fund if the report is not submitted to the budget committees.

MSDE respectfully disagrees for the reasons noted above in this testimony.

3. Reduce funding to fund the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (LBPH) at its mandated amount of 25.0% of the amount received by the State Library Resource Center. This reduction should not affect operations for LBPH, as new positions provided for it in the fiscal 2017 allowance currently include a 7.23% turnover rate, as opposed to the 25.0% turnover rate that is standard for new positions.

Reduction: \$ 48,470

MSDE Concur.