



## **Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education**

**William E. Kirwan**  
Chairman

August 10, 2017

Andrew R. Smarick  
President, State Board of Education  
200 W. Baltimore Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Karen B. Salmon  
State Superintendent of Schools  
200 W. Baltimore Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Dear President Smarick and Superintendent Salmon:

On behalf of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education, I want to thank you for the opportunity the commission members had to review and discuss the draft Consolidated State Plan required under ESSA. As chair of the Commission, I want to share with you some thoughts on how I believe the Commission's work and the work of the State Board of Education and State Department of Education can be complimentary in the implementation of the ESSA plan, with our shared goal of elevating the quality of our public education system for Maryland's students.

As you know, the Commission has been examining the strategies and policies that top performing education systems around the world are using to improve student achievement and preparation for college and career. These top systems, which include Singapore, Shanghai, Finland, Ontario (Canada) and only one U.S. state, Massachusetts, have developed education systems that are student-centered, providing rigorous and clear pathways – and expectations – for all students to become college and career ready. They value high quality teachers – investing resources and demanding excellence in teacher preparation programs, teacher induction programs, career ladders, etc. – and as a result, teaching is a valued profession. They have processes that produce effective school leadership and rigorous systems of accountability. They invest heavily in early education for children who are not born into families with economic means and who need it the most. And, they ensure that schools serving communities with high concentration of poverty have the resources that enable their students to be successful.

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Although the Commission has not yet completed its work, I believe the Commission will recommend that Maryland embrace many of these strategies and policies with the goal of making our pre-K through 12 system one of the top performing systems in the world. Of course this cannot happen overnight. But I believe it is incumbent upon us as a State to act boldly on behalf of Maryland students and parents to ensure that our students are prepared for high quality, high wage jobs in the 21st century.

On behalf of the Commission, I urge the State Board of Education to set ambitious yet realistic goals that will place our State on a path to support student success so that every student truly has the opportunity and ability to be prepared for college or to move directly into the workforce with a credential that leads to economic opportunity.

The Commission looks forward to reviewing the final ESSA plan and working with the State Board of Education and State Superintendent, as we develop recommendations aimed at making Maryland one of the best education systems in the world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William E. Kirwan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "William" being more prominent.

William E. Kirwan  
Chairman, Commission on Innovation  
and Excellence in Education

cc: Commission members  
Governor Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.  
President Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr.  
Speaker Michael E. Busch