



Accountability & Implementation Board

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

July 2023

Covering
November 2021 - June 2023

Chair
Isiah Leggett

Vice Chair
William E. Kirwan

Executive Director
Rachel H. Hise



**Accountability &
Implementation
Board**

Board Members
Mara R. Doss
Jennifer M. Lynch
Joseph Manko
Justin Robinson
Laura M. Stapleton

BLUEPRINT FOR MARYLAND'S FUTURE

July 12, 2023

Honorable Wes Moore
Governor of Maryland

Honorable Bill Ferguson
President of the Senate

Honorable Adrienne Jones
Speaker of the House of Delegates

Dear Governor Moore, President Ferguson, Speaker Jones, and Members of the General Assembly:

The Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) is pleased to submit its first Annual Report. We appreciate your patience in receiving this report and apologize for the delay. The AIB was not formally appointed until after the original due date of November 1, 2021, and the November 1, 2022 deadline was extended in order to allow the AIB to complete the Initial Blueprint Comprehensive Plan. However, it has taken additional time to complete and submit the report as the AIB has been building its capacity.

As a new board and State agency, it has taken significant time and effort to establish a functioning board and agency while concurrently doing the important work of immediately supporting successful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. This work is even more urgent, as you know, with the delayed start in implementing the Blueprint and the significant negative impact of COVID-19 on our students and staff. To address the lateness of the report, we have expanded it to include the period since the Board's inaugural members were officially appointed in mid-November 2021 through June 2023, after the appointment of Justin Robinson to fill the vacancy on the Board created when Fagan Harris resigned to become Chief of Staff to Governor Moore.

In its first 18 months, the AIB focused on laying a solid foundation for the successful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Foremost, this involved an eight-month process to develop the Initial Blueprint Comprehensive Plan to guide Blueprint implementation over the next 10 years. This process, which included significant stakeholder and public input, culminated with the AIB adopting the initial plan on December 1, 2022 (posted on the AIB's website <https://aib.maryland.gov/Pages/Blueprint-plans.aspx>). Hard copies have been widely distributed and are available through the Legislative Information Desk and upon request on the AIB's website.

In the initial plan, the AIB focused on identifying implementation considerations and needed technical assistance to support State and local agencies as they implement the Blueprint as required by law.

The AIB is committed to making strong efforts to implement the Blueprint's requirements before recommending major changes to the law to the Governor and General Assembly. Chapter 119 of 2023, which was introduced at the AIB's request, includes the AIB's recommendation to modify the full-day prekindergarten funding formula to reflect the legislative intent that homeless youth, English learners, and students with disabilities regardless of income are a priority for current funding. It also includes several other clarifications to the Blueprint law.

Additional detail on the activities of the AIB since its creation are included in this report. The AIB has provided and participated in numerous technical assistance sessions for the local school systems over the past year and is planning a significant increase in technical assistance over the next year based on needs identified during the review of the initial implementation plans.

The AIB has also held public meetings with the State Superintendent and State Board President on several occasions, culminating in a joint meeting between the State Board of Education and AIB in December 2022. The AIB will continue to support, promote, and collaborate with the State Board and State Superintendent on Blueprint implementation; successful implementation can only be achieved if we are aligned on the goals of the Blueprint and how to achieve those goals.

The second annual report will be submitted by November 1, 2023, and will include more information related to the initial Blueprint Implementation Plans submitted by State and local agencies in March 2023, the Updated Blueprint Comprehensive Implementation Plan to be adopted by August 1, and recommendations for legislative changes in the 2024 session as required by statute.

On behalf of the AIB, we look forward to working with you to make the Blueprint for Maryland's Future a success and provide a world-class education to *every* student in Maryland, regardless of their zip code, so that no one is left behind.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Isiah Leggett", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Isiah Leggett
Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rachel Hise", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rachel Hise
Executive Director

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Establishing the Accountability & Implementation Board

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future was created by Chapter 36 of 2021, which passed the General Assembly in March 2020 as House Bill 1300 and was enacted into law in March 2021 when the Maryland General Assembly overrode Governor Hogan's veto. Subsequent legislation was also enacted in 2021, Chapter 55 (House Bill 1372), to revise timelines in the Blueprint due to the delay in implementation and to address the impacts from COVID-19. As a result, the appointment of the initial AIB Members and establishment of the AIB as a new state agency was delayed. The AIB Members were officially appointed in November 2021, which allowed the AIB to begin its work.

Appointment of Members

The AIB is composed of seven members appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, chosen from a slate prepared by the AIB Nominating Committee established under Section 5-403 of the Education Article. The members serve 6-year terms, initially staggered, and are eligible for re-nomination. Members are to consist of individuals who collectively reflect, to the extent practicable, the geographic, racial, ethnic, cultural, and gender diversity of the State; and a high level of knowledge and expertise in:

- Early education through secondary education policy;
- Postsecondary education policy;
- Teaching in public schools;
- Strategies used by top-performing state and national education systems in the world;
- Leading and implementing systemic change in complex organizations; and
- Financial auditing and accounting.

The inaugural members of the Accountability and Implementation Board are:

- Isiah Leggett (appointed Chair by the Governor)
- William Kirwan (elected Vice-Chair)
- Mara Doss
- Fagan Harris¹
- Jennifer Lynch
- Joseph Manko
- Laura Stapleton

Justin Robinson was appointed by Governor Moore in May 2022 to replace Member Harris. Biographies, terms, and other information regarding the AIB Members are available on the AIB website at: <https://aib.maryland.gov/Pages/members.aspx>

¹ After the Maryland 2022 General Election, Governor-Elect Wes Moore selected AIB Member Fagan Harris to be Chief of Staff. As of January 17, 2023, Mr. Harris resigned and the AIB Nominating Committee began the process to fill the vacancy. In April 2022, the committee submitted its nominations to the Governor, who selected Justin Robinson in May 2022.

Establishing the Accountability & Implementation Board - continued

Purpose and Charge

The AIB was created to oversee implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future during the phased-in implementation of the law and evaluate whether the goals of the Blueprint are being achieved. The AIB was initially intended to start work July 1, 2020, which was later moved to July 1, 2021, and will terminate on June 30, 2032, unless the Governor and General Assembly determine that it should continue its work.

Initially, the AIB was required to create a Comprehensive Implementation Plan by December 1, 2022, to guide the work of all State and local agencies required to implement the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Moving forward, the Board is to evaluate the data submitted to it by units of State and local government responsible for implementing any part of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, assess the effectiveness of the Blueprint implementation, hold State and local governments accountable, and evaluate whether the Blueprint's outcomes are being achieved with fidelity. Any updates to the Comprehensive Plan must be approved by August 1st each year.

The AIB is required to hire an outside consultant to conduct a program evaluation of the Blueprint's implementation and progress over the implementation period. The interim evaluation and accompanying AIB report with recommendations is due in December 2024. The final evaluation and the AIB report, which must include a recommendation as to whether the AIB should continue to monitor Blueprint implementation and/or whether structural organizational changes should be made, is due by December 2030.

The AIB is committed to transparency and providing ongoing opportunities for public and stakeholder engagement and feedback. Receiving, considering, and acting upon input from stakeholders and the public has been achieved through working sessions open to the public, surveys, [feedback forms](#), written and oral testimony, and email. The AIB also welcomes [public comment](#) at each regular Board meeting and reserves 15 minutes at the beginning of each meeting for oral testimony since March 2023. Written testimony may be submitted at any time to aib@maryland.gov.

In addition to the website (discussed further below), the AIB maintains a mailing list of interested individuals who receive regular e-mail updates regarding AIB meetings, recruitments, feedback opportunities, and other important information. Individuals interested in signing up may email aib@maryland.gov or submit this [form](#). The AIB also has a presence on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) to reach stakeholders and provide timely updates.

Establishing the Accountability & Implementation Board - continued

Meetings

The AIB has maintained a very busy schedule since its inaugural meeting on November 15, 2021. Transparency and public input are critically important to AIB and to the successful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. To that end, and due to the significant amount of work to be done initially, the AIB has met frequently since its inaugural meeting, often at least twice per month. In total, the AIB held meetings on 31 dates (multiple sessions were held on several dates) from its inaugural meeting in November 2021 through December 2022.

In 2023, the AIB has held regular monthly meetings, which will be supplemented by additional meetings as needed. All public meetings are live-streamed (via Zoom/YouTube) and archived video recordings and meeting materials can be accessed via the [AIB website](#).

In addition to numerous meetings to develop the Blueprint Comprehensive Plan, which are discussed further below, the 2022 meetings included several presentations from State Superintendent Choudhury on Blueprint for Maryland's Future work being undertaken by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and required submissions to AIB. The AIB staff reviewed MSDE materials and made recommendations to AIB including the Draft College and Career Readiness Empirical Study Request for Proposals, Expert Review Teams, Educator Preparation and Licensure proposed regulations, local education agency (LEA) Template for Blueprint Implementation Plans, and Criteria for Success. The AIB also held a public hearing in April 2022 to receive input on the proposed educator licensure and preparation regulations before providing feedback to the MSDE.

The AIB and the State Board of Education held a joint meeting on December 16, 2022, to discuss shared goals related to Blueprint implementation. The two (2) boards committed to working collaboratively to support the successful implementation of the Blueprint, recognizing that it is the only path to realizing the ambitious goals of the Blueprint.

In May 2023, the Board held its first in-person meeting at the Anne Arundel County Board of Education. The AIB intends to hold more in-person meetings in the future, rotating among local boards of education and other public spaces until it can procure adequate office and meeting space.

Advisory Committees

The AIB established four advisory committees to serve as additional engaged stakeholders, experts, and "eyes and ears," to provide insights, ideas, and feedback from across the State to the AIB. The AIB is deeply committed to engaging stakeholders who represent the rich geographic, racial, ethnic, cultural, economic, and gender diversity of Maryland's residents in implementing the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

Establishing the Accountability & Implementation Board - continued

The four (4) advisory committees provide additional input and feedback on each of the four (4) content pillar areas of the Blueprint:

- Pillar 1 – Early Childhood Education
- Pillar 2 – High Quality and Diverse Teachers and Leaders
- Pillar 3 – College and Career Readiness
- Pillar 4 – More Resources for Students to be Successful.

The AIB engaged in an extensive process to recruit for and select members for the advisory committees. A subcommittee of AIB Members and staff reviewed all 213 applications and supporting materials submitted by the June 20, 2022, deadline. Six (6) members, including one (1) student member, were selected in July 2022, to serve as the inaugural members of each advisory committee. Members have staggered 1- and 2-year terms and may reapply for membership. In total, the Advisory Committee members represent the State in both geographic and demographic diversity.

Member biographies are available on the website at: <https://aib.maryland.gov/Pages/advisory-committees.aspx>

The advisory committees are charged with sharing insights from community members regarding successes and challenges associated with implementing the Blueprint and providing advice to the AIB on improving the Blueprint's implementation to achieve its goals. Meetings of the advisory committees are live-streamed, recorded, and posted on the AIB website at: <https://aib.maryland.gov/Pages/meetings.aspx>

On September 29, 2022, the AIB held a kickoff meeting with the four (4) advisory committees to discuss the role, responsibilities, common procedures, and suggested activities of the advisory committees. At the conclusion of this whole group meeting, each of the four (4) committees broke into their own meetings to host their inaugural meeting.

Advisory committees are expected to meet at least once each quarter. In Fall 2022, many of the advisory committees met more frequently as they were beginning their work and were asked by the AIB to review and provide feedback on the draft Initial Blueprint Comprehensive Implementation Plan. Each advisory committee has established its own protocols and focus areas for their pillar given the timelines of Blueprint rollout. Several advisory committees have invited guests to their meetings and others are working to include the voice and considerations of other agencies and stakeholders invested in their specific pillar.

Starting Up the AIB as a State Agency

AIB Staff

The AIB is an independent unit of State government led by the Board and supported by an Executive Director and staff. The AIB is intended to be a small State agency that may utilize consultants and other experts to supplement its staff to provide timely assistance to support the Blueprint's implementation. State law mandates that the agency has at least 15 employees in total when fully staffed.

The agency is led by an Executive Director. Rachel Hise was hired by the Board in February 2022, to be the first executive director after a 28-year career as a nonpartisan analyst, primarily in education and the budget, with the Maryland Department of Legislative Services. As of June 2023, the agency has six full-time employees, legal counsel (50% time), and a contractual employee:

- Executive Director
- Policy Director
- Implementation Plan Director
- Deputy Director for Operations
- Finance Director
- Special/Executive Assistant
- Assistant Attorney General (half-time)
- Management Associate (contractual)

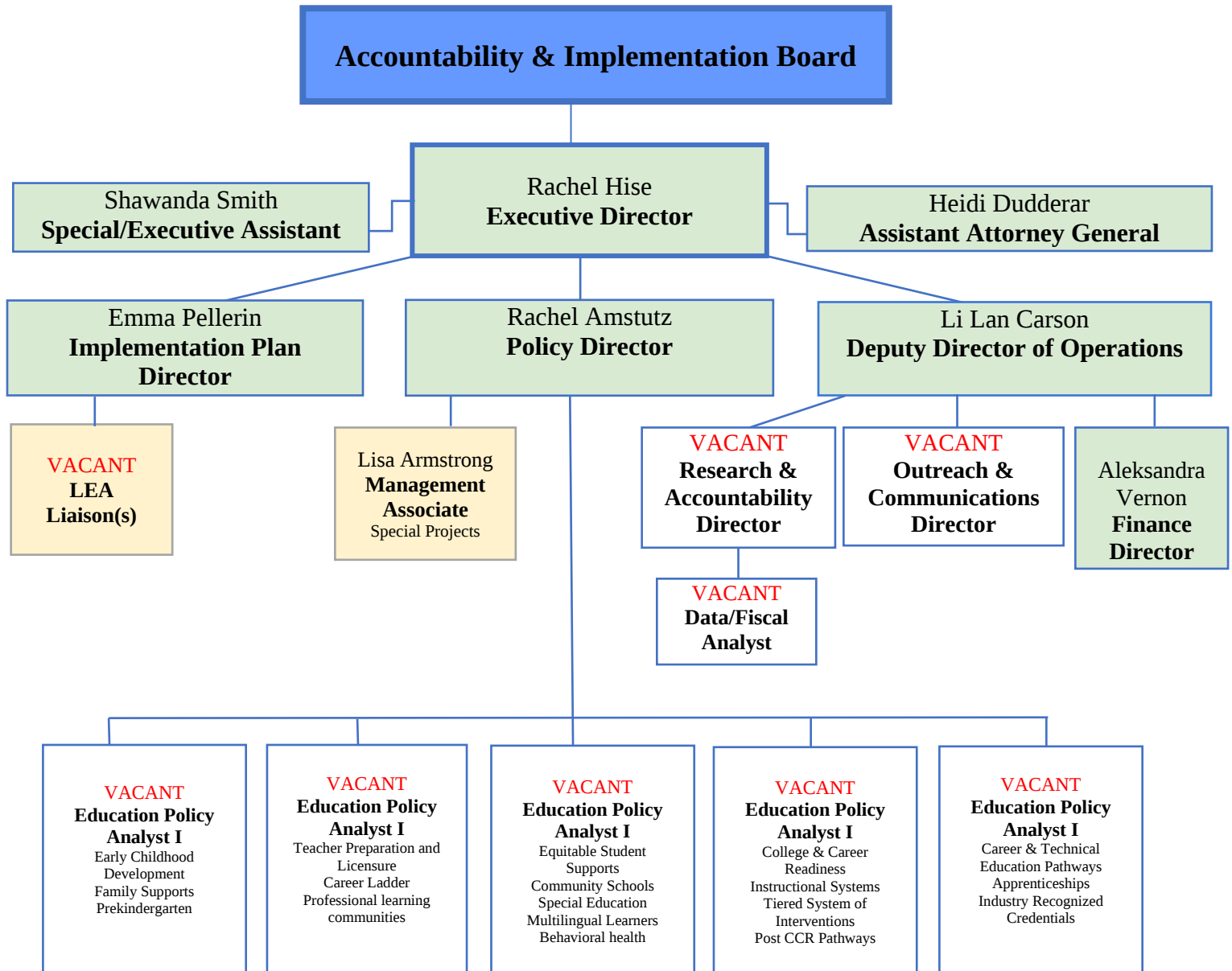
The AIB will be recruiting to fill as many of the remaining positions as possible in fiscal 2024, including:

- Education Policy/Program Analysts (Summer/Fall 2023)
- Data/Fiscal Analyst (Summer/Fall 2023)
- Research and Accountability Director (Fall 2023)
- Communications and Outreach Director (Fall/Winter 2023)

The current organizational chart is shown below. Blueprint liaisons to the local education agencies (LEAs) and State agencies may also be hired on a part-time basis. The AIB is dedicated to recruiting and hiring a diverse staff to support Blueprint implementation in diverse communities across the State. Job notices are posted on the AIB website (<https://aib.maryland.gov/Pages/join-our-team.aspx>) in addition to the State Jobs website, social media, and other outlets. In addition, individuals can sign up to be notified when job notices are posted and may submit resumes in advance of job postings.

Starting Up the AIB as a State Agency - continued

Organizational Chart



Filled FTE
Vacant FTE
Contractual

Starting Up the AIB as a State Agency - continued

Start-Up Challenges

The AIB has overcome several challenges as it launched as a new State agency. The AIB staff has worked to minimize the impact of these challenges on the substantive work of the AIB. Many of the challenges are faced by every new agency, but agencies are not created out of “whole cloth” very frequently in State government; they are more often due to the reorganization of existing agencies (and staff). These challenges include the administrative processes of establishing an agency with other control agencies in State government, accessing personnel and financial management systems, and setting up information technology, including the ability to live-stream meetings. The AIB faced additional, unanticipated challenges that affected its ability to function.

Fiscal challenges have had a substantial impact on the operations of the AIB. These included the inability to access funds appropriated for the agency until mid-fiscal 2023. This impacted the ability to fund everything from Zoom accounts and cellular phones to website development and contractors. Without access to its budget, the agency relied on a small number of staff and good faith agreements with a minimal number of contractors to complete significant tasks with delayed payment in its first year of operation. The delayed start-up of the AIB and inability to access its funds resulted in the AIB spending less than \$200,000 in fiscal 2022 and reverting the balance of its appropriation at the end of the fiscal year, despite language adopted in Chapter 33 of 2022 authorizing the AIB and other agencies with unexpended Blueprint funds to carry forward the funds. As a result, the AIB has not yet had access to the mandated \$3 million in funding to support technical assistance for LEAs in fiscal 2022; funds were provided in the fiscal 2023 and 2024 budgets.

The AIB has worked through many of these challenges with the assistance of the Department of Budget and Management and others in State government and the support of the General Assembly. It continues to face challenges as a new, and small, agency that is not fully recognized throughout State government. The AIB does not yet have office space or permanent meeting space. AIB staff currently work 100% virtually; the agency plans to operate in a hybrid work environment with weekly in-person work once office space is available.

Website

Creating an accessible, user-friendly website was an early priority for the AIB to ensure that all stakeholders and the public were able to follow the work of the AIB in implementing the Blueprint and especially the development of the Initial Blueprint Comprehensive Plan.

The website was launched in July 2022, and has received positive feedback from many users. The website is a living resource that is updated regularly and is intended to be a transparent and accessible repository for information related to Blueprint implementation, resources, and reports. Specifically, the AIB website includes links to [reports](#) submitted to the AIB by LEAs, the Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center, MSDE, and others.

Starting Up the AIB as a State Agency - continued

It is also a portal to all AIB meetings, both live and archived, including advisory committees and workgroups established by the AIB. Finally, the website offers numerous opportunities for stakeholder and public feedback about the website itself as well as draft and working documents that AIB is seeking feedback on. Please visit aib.maryland.gov.

Implementing the Blueprint for Maryland's Future

Initial Comprehensive Implementation Plan

The Blueprint law requires the AIB to develop a comprehensive implementation plan to implement the Blueprint for Maryland's Future that includes a timeline for each year of the implementation period with key milestones to be achieved by each State and local agency required to implement an element of the Blueprint. After considering input provided by interested stakeholders, the AIB must adopt the Blueprint Comprehensive Implementation Plan. The law originally required the plan to be adopted by February 15, 2021, which was subsequently revised to February 2022 after the Blueprint law was enacted in 2021. However, given that the AIB was not appointed until November 2021, the General Assembly passed a revised timeline in the 2022 legislative session based on the AIB's recommendations. These changes were enacted in Chapter 33 of 2022 (HB 1450) (see "Recommending Legislative Changes" section below for more information on the changes to the law recommended by AIB in the 2022 legislative session). As revised, the AIB was required to adopt the Blueprint Comprehensive Implementation Plan by December 1, 2022.

Plan Development Process

Developing the Comprehensive Implementation Plan was a significant undertaking requiring collaboration with involved agencies such as the MSDE, LEAs, local workforce development boards, and stakeholder groups. Throughout the process, the AIB live-streamed all working sessions and invited those interested in participating into Zoom meetings to share their questions, concerns, and input. Additionally, the AIB received feedback on the Draft Initial BCP through Google Forms and emails to the AIB. Feedback was constantly reviewed, processed, and incorporated into the development of the plan.

Summer Working Sessions

In preparation for the development of the initial Blueprint Comprehensive Implementation Plan, in May-June 2022 the AIB held a series of public meetings with Kirwan Commission members and international and national experts to dive deeper into the policy context and rationale behind the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and its five pillars.

To obtain input from stakeholders and the public, the AIB hosted nine Summer Working Sessions. There were many goals of these working sessions including: educating AIB and stakeholders about the components and development of the Blueprint; understanding concerns, questions, and implementation considerations; and maintaining transparency in the process of developing the Comprehensive Implementation Plan.

Following these initial meetings, interactive virtual meetings were held in July-September 2022 organized around each Pillar. To translate the Blueprint law into actionable plans, the AIB staff developed Pillar Implementation Graphics for each of the five (5) pillars to show the tasks and subtasks, along with the timeline, required in each content area.

Implementing the Blueprint for Maryland's Future - continued

These Pillar graphics were updated between each meeting with the input from stakeholders. The final Pillar graphics can be found at the following link, <https://bit.ly/BPpillargraphics>.

Public Hearing on Draft Plan

The draft Initial Blueprint Comprehensive Plan (BCP) was posted on the AIB website on October 26, 2022, and emailed to the AIB's mailing list of over 1,300 stakeholders. Two (2) additional components for LEAs, the LEA template, and the LEA Criteria for Success, were posted on November 4, 2022. Stakeholder and public input were requested to continue refining the draft of the BCP.

To provide opportunities and time for the stakeholders and the public to share feedback on the draft Blueprint Comprehensive Plan, a Public Hearing was held on November 10, 2022, at which 49 speakers shared their input. In addition, 444 pieces of written testimony were submitted.

All feedback was shared publicly (available here: <https://bit.ly/BCPTestimony>) on the AIB website and reviewed and considered for incorporation in the Initial BCP. At the November 17, 2022, AIB Meeting, feedback received to date was summarized, synthesized, and shared. In addition, AIB staff shared how feedback was analyzed, categorized, and determined whether each item was actionable and whether to recommend action.

Initial Comprehensive Plan Adopted



December 2022

The AIB met on December 1, 2022, to review and approve the Initial Blueprint Comprehensive Plan. Hard copies of the plan were widely distributed in early 2023 and made available at the Legislative Information Desk and upon request. The Initial BCP is posted on the AIB's website: <https://aib.maryland.gov/Pages/Blueprint-plans.aspx>

Implementing the Blueprint for Maryland's Future - continued

After the Comprehensive Implementation Plan was adopted, State and local agencies/entities that are required to implement an element of the Blueprint must submit their own implementation plans to the AIB for approval. AIB must adopt guidelines for State and local agencies/entities that are required to submit and carry out implementation plans that include a maximum page length, including appendices, for the plans. These State and local Blueprint implementation plans were required to be submitted by March 15, 2023, under the revised timeline adopted by the General Assembly, for review and approval by the AIB. For LEAs, the plans are submitted concurrently to the MSDE for review. The MSDE is required to recommend approval or disapproval of LEA implementation plans to AIB.

Technical Assistance to Support LEAs

The AIB staff began meeting with Blueprint coordinators at least monthly beginning in Spring 2022 to provide information on the Blueprint, share guidance, and support their work as the Initial BCP was under development. These efforts ramped up in Fall 2022 as the LEA Template and Criteria for Success were being revised. AIB staff attended presentations organized by the MSDE for Blueprint coordinators on using the initial Blueprint implementation plan template and Criteria for Success, as well as information sessions on early childhood education, post-CCR pathways, and completing Blueprint implementation plan data tables.

Following the AIB's adoption of the Initial BCP, in collaboration with MSDE, AIB staff met with Blueprint coordinators and planning teams from each of the 24 LEAs to support development of their implementation plans and provide feedback on draft plans prior to their March 15 submission date. Individual AIB and MSDE staff each reviewed a section of the draft plans provided by LEAs and identified areas of strength and areas for improvement specific to that section. In each subsequent feedback session with each LEA, AIB and MSDE staff shared their preliminary findings with staff, discussed challenges that they had encountered in the writing process, and brainstormed potential solutions.

Prior to the implementation plan submission deadline, in early March, AIB staff hosted a virtual technical assistance session for all interested LEA staff that highlighted innovative thinking related to Blueprint implementation proposed by LEAs in their draft plans. To help Blueprint planning teams in refining their draft plans, AIB staff asked select Blueprint coordinators and their colleagues to share promising strategies for meeting Blueprint objectives that they described in their draft implementation plans with participants.

Implementing the Blueprint for Maryland's Future - continued

Outcome Measures Workgroup

In the Initial BCP, the AIB identified expected outcome measures for the Blueprint overall and preliminary outcome measures for each pillar and objectives within each pillar to assess progress towards meeting the Blueprint's expected outcomes. The AIB also announced in the Initial BCP that it would be appointing a workgroup to refine these outcome measures and identify metrics and proposed targets to measure implementation progress. The board appointed nine members in February, including current staff members from LEAs, advocacy groups, the Maryland State Education Association (MSEA), and subject matter experts. Representatives from the MSDE, Maryland Longitudinal Data Systems Center (MDLSC), Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), and the University System of Maryland (USM), as well as the AIB staff and the AIB's racial equity consultant serve as "ex-officio" members of the workgroup. In addition, staff from the CTE Committee, the Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports, and higher education institutions, as well as pillar-specific advisory committee members, attend workgroup meetings to share their expertise and insights as needed.

The workgroup has held nine virtual meetings to date from late February through June to refine existing outcome measures and propose additional measures for the AIB's consideration to include in its updated Blueprint Comprehensive Plan. The workgroup will hold a final summer meeting in July to make recommendations to the AIB and will continue meeting in Fall 2023.

Recommending Legislative Changes

2022 Legislative Session

Immediately following the selection of the Executive Director, the AIB set about developing recommended legislative changes pertaining to the Blueprint initial timeline, which required further adjustments due to the delayed appointment of AIB members and start-up of the AIB. First, the deadline for completing the Blueprint Comprehensive Implementation Plan needed to be extended from February 15, 2022. The AIB recommended December 1, 2022, and recommended a technical revision to the college and career readiness (CCR) support pathway. Specifically, the AIB recommended allowing LEAs to launch their CCR support pathways in the 2023-2024 school year rather than the 2022-2023 school year, which aligns with the post-CCR pathway launch in the upcoming school year.

The AIB also recommended modifying the criteria to be used to determine the initial release of LEA funds in fiscal 2023 be tied to the minimum guidelines established for the LEA Blueprint Implementation plans due to be submitted by March 15, 2023. Fiscal 2023 funds will be released based on the AIB's determination that each LEA plan meets the minimum guidelines established for the initial LEA Blueprint Implementation Plans. The release of fiscal 2024 funds for each LEA will be contingent on AIB's decision, after receiving MSDE's recommendation, to approve or disapprove the initial Blueprint Implementation Plan. Finally, a technical correction was proposed regarding the calculation of the LEA funds to be withheld automatically each year. All these recommendations were codified in Chapter 33 of 2022 (HB 1450).

2023 Legislative Session

The AIB is committed to supporting implementation of the Blueprint's policies and requirements as reflected in current law before recommending changes to the law. Thus, the AIB has made few recommendations for legislative changes to date. The AIB did propose a technical correction to the full-day Pre-K funding formula to address an oversight in the law. The Blueprint sets a priority for initial Blueprint funding for Tier 1 eligible students (from families with family income up to 300% of the federal poverty level). In addition, the law identifies homeless students, English learners, and students with disabilities regardless of family income as a funding priority. While many LEAs are implementing this priority and enrolling these priority students, the formula does not include these students in the enrollment count for funding. The AIB recommended immediately including these students in the enrollment count.

House Bill 770 was introduced at the AIB's request to make this change. As enacted, Chapter 119 included this provision and additional clarifications to the Blueprint law related to educators on the career ladder and the alternative State form for low-income eligibility. In addition, the Administration introduced HB 1219 (Educator Shortage Reduction Act) enacted as Chapter 627 that modified several provisions related to the Blueprint law.

In its oversight role, the AIB serves as a conduit between State and local agencies and entities required to implement provisions of the Blueprint. It is these collaborative partnerships that will enable the Blueprint to be successful. The AIB has worked to establish strong working relationships with all agencies charged with implementing the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

Collaborating with Partners

Maryland State Department of Education and Local Education Agencies

The AIB and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) have collaborated over the past 16 months to ensure alignment and consistency to the degree possible in providing information and setting expectations about the Blueprint. The AIB and the MSDE staff meet regularly to discuss both short and long-term activities related to Blueprint implementation. The MSDE and the AIB have collaborated to develop guidance and respond to questions related to the Blueprint, which were distributed to LEAs and other stakeholders. In addition to the technical assistance sessions discussed above, AIB staff supported information sessions facilitated by MSDE for Blueprint coordinators on using the implementation plan template and Criteria for Success, early childhood education, and post-CCR pathways. In addition, the AIB staff worked with the MSDE to support development of its Blueprint implementation plan and to provide ongoing review of Expert Review Team preliminary processes and preliminary materials.

The AIB and the MSDE have also collaborated to support the LEAs and local boards of education in their implementation of the Blueprint and in their development of local Blueprint Implementation Plans. These collaborations include:

- Monthly MSDE Blueprint Coordinator Meetings, attended by AIB staff.
- Monthly PSSAM Blueprint Coordinator Meetings, attended by AIB and MSDE staff.
- Weekly LEA Chief Financial Officer meetings, attended by AIB and MSDE staff to provide information on Blueprint implementation and funding formulas and respond to questions and requests for further information.
- Additional Blueprint Coordinator meetings focused on the Blueprint Comprehensive Plan and the LEA Template, Criteria for Success, and Implementation Guide

Other Partners

AIB Members and staff have met with representatives of numerous organizations and made presentations, in most cases several times over the past year, including (but not limited to):

- Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland (PSSAM)
- Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP)
- Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP)
- Maryland Association of Counties (MACO)
- Maryland Assessment Group
- Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE)
- Maryland State Education Association (MSEA)
- Blueprint Coalition
- Strong Schools Maryland
- Maryland Association for Racial Equity
- Maryland Education Coalition
- Maryland Philanthropy Network

Collaborating with Partners - continued

Consortium of Coordinated Community Supports

As the new Consortium of Coordinated Community Supports (CCCS) within the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission in the Department of Health launched, the AIB established monthly meetings with its staff and attended many of its meetings, including subcommittees. The AIB partnered with the CCCS to spread the word about their initiative, seeking public input, and providing guidance on Blueprint implementation.

Career and Technical Education Committee

The Governor's Workforce Development Board within the Department of Labor initiated the creation of the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Committee, as provided by law, while the AIB was also establishing itself. Both agencies collaborated regularly throughout this time including AIB staff attending kickoff meetings and regularly scheduled CTE meetings, and staff to staff collaborations about upcoming work. Additionally, CTE Committee staff have joined AIB Advisory Committee Pillar 3 meetings to discuss and support understanding of the Blueprint Comprehensive Plan.

Of interest, one of the AIB Advisory Committee Members for Pillar 3 is also a local workforce development leader. He has been instrumental in bridging the local workforce boards and leaders to the CTE Committee and AIB. They have been focusing their efforts on understanding and preparing to implement the requirements of the Blueprint particularly related to the new career counseling program for middle and high school students.

Local Workforce Development Boards and Community Colleges

In December 2022, AIB hosted collaborative meetings with local workforce development boards, community college representatives, and LEA representatives. These meetings have been instrumental in clarifying the expectations of the Blueprint, identifying next steps, and building relationships to assist in accomplishing the work of the Blueprint's CTE initiatives. As a follow up and to support the development of Career Counseling MOUs, the AIB hosted a convening in February 2023 jointly with MSDE to share best practices and provide guidance and responses to questions from LEAs, local workforce development boards and community colleges.

Maryland Higher Education Commission

The AIB staff worked with the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) staff to address questions related to the Blueprint. The MHEC staff participated in the Teacher Preparation Workgroup and the Outcome Measures Workgroup. In addition, the AIB staff worked with the MHEC to support development of its Blueprint implementation plan.

Teacher Preparation Programs - 2- and 4-year Institutions

The AIB convened a Teacher Preparation Workgroup in August 2022 to discuss the implications of implementing the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, specifically related to the full-year teacher residency requirement. These interactive sessions, two to date, have proved to be invaluable in

Collaborating with Partners - continued

expanding the connections and discussions between all higher education institutions in Maryland that have teacher preparation programs and the LEAs. Additional sessions will be scheduled to continue discussing changes that will be implemented in programs to ensure alignment to the Blueprint's requirements.

Each teacher preparation program was asked to provide programmatic data to the AIB to allow for the collection of baseline data. Additionally, analysis of this data allows for identification of consistencies as well as uniqueness throughout the state of Maryland in all Teacher Preparation programs. In one meeting, the group heard updates about Teacher Collaborative Grant recipients. These included presentations from Towson University, University of Maryland, Morgan State, McDaniel College, and Bowie State. Another meeting explored best practices in top-performing systems.

Measuring Initial Progress in Blueprint Implementation

The Blueprint is in the early days of implementation with many LEAs in the planning and early implementation phases for most Blueprint programs. Chapter 771 of 2019 set out the policy framework for the Blueprint and made initial investments to jump start the transformation based on the Kirwan Commission's preliminary policy recommendations. This included \$325 million annually in FY 20 and 21, later extended to FY 22 due to the delay in the Blueprint's enactment. The new Blueprint funding formulas were funded beginning in FY 23. Due to the Governor's veto of HB 1300 of 2020, which reflected the Commission's final policy and funding recommendations, and the subsequent override of the veto by the General Assembly in the 2021 session, the new formulas were not funded in the FY 22 budget.

Most of the progress can be seen on the input side, e.g., additional students being served by full day PreK, community schools, tutoring, etc. This is evident in the initial LEA implementation plans that the AIB and the MSDE staff have been reviewing in spring/summer 2023. The impact of COVID-19 on student learning loss has compounded both the need for the Blueprint and the challenges of implementing it successfully.

Pillar 1: Early Childhood Education

- Since Fall 2016, full-day prekindergarten for 4-year-olds has increased by 7,129 students or 71% to 17,177 in Fall 2022.
 - LEAs currently offer full day PreK to all or nearly all 4-year-olds: Baltimore City and Caroline, Dorchester, Garrett, Kent, Somerset, Talbot, Washington, and Wicomico.
 - Blueprint goal is a mixed delivery system of public and private providers. The impact of COVID-19 on the private provider community has made the challenge even greater. Currently nearly all full day PreK slots are offered by LEAs.
- Judy Centers - Blueprint calls for an increase of 135 centers over 10 years = 250% increases over 54 existing centers in FY 20.
 - Judy Centers are named after Judith P. Hoyer, a long-time early education educator and spouse of U.S. Congressman Steny Hoyer.
 - As of FY 22, Maryland was home to 69 Judy Center sites throughout the State, serving children and families in Title I schools in every local education agency.
 - 36 additional centers funded in FY 21-24 (including 3 new in FY 24).
- Patty Centers (formerly named Family Support Centers) – Blueprint calls for an increase of 30 centers over 10 years = 120% increases over 25 existing centers in FY 20.
 - Patty Centers are named after Patricia H. Kirwan, a former early childhood educator and the spouse of former USM Chancellor William E. Kirwan.

Measuring Initial Progress in Blueprint Implementation - continued

- Maryland has a network of 24 Patty Centers in 14 counties that offer free, educational, and health-related services to parents and their children ages birth through three, including: Baltimore City and Baltimore, Caroline, Carroll, Cecil, Dorchester, Frederick, Kent, Montgomery, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, Talbot, Washington, and Wicomico counties.
- Nine (9) additional centers are funded in FY 22-24.

Pillar 2: High-Quality and Diverse Teachers and Leaders

- To make teacher salaries more comparable to other professions and attract more teacher candidates to the profession, the Blueprint requires the LEAs to increase teacher salaries by 10% between FY 20 and 24. The State share of funding for a 3% increase was provided in FY 20, with additional funds provided in FY 23 and 24.
- The Blueprint also requires the minimum teacher salary to increase to \$60,000 by FY 27.
- LEAs are developing career ladders in accordance with the Blueprint that will provide additional salary increases as teachers move up the career ladder into teacher leadership roles within the school while remaining in the classroom. Beginning in FY 23, teachers who earn National Board Certification (NBC) from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards receive a \$10,000 salary increase plus an additional \$7,000 if they are teaching in a low performing school.
- In the 2022-2023 school year, there were 1,786 NBC active teachers across the State with about 10% (173) teaching in low-performing schools.
- The State and LEAs support teachers pursuing NBC by paying the entire enrollment fee. Since the Blueprint career ladder became law, there has been a significant increase in the number of teachers pursuing NBC, from approximately 1,500 to 4,700 (over 200% increase).

Pillar 3: College and Career Readiness

- Blueprint funding provides opportunities for high school students to pursue post-CCR pathways once they are college and career ready. These opportunities are to be provided at no cost to students or their families beginning in the 2022-2023 school year.

Transitional Supplemental Instruction (TSI) i.e., Tutoring for Struggling Learners

- The new Transitional Supplemental Instruction (TSI) program for struggling learners was established in FY 20 to provide additional funding for school systems to provide tutoring and other supplemental instruction to students in K-3 who are not reading on grade level with a goal of all students reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade. Funds may also be used for math instruction.

Measuring Initial Progress in Blueprint Implementation by Pillar - continued

- Funding is provided to support high quality tutoring during the school day for approximately 150,000 students statewide.
- School systems must use high quality instructional materials and trained tutors to work with students in small groups of no more than four (4).
- The program phases out after FY 26 as teachers are provided more time during the school day to work with students individually/small groups.

Pillar 4 More Resources for Students Who Need Them

Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program to support Community Schools

- This is a new Blueprint program established in FY 20 and funded schools at the highest concentration level of 80% or more students eligible for free and reduced-price meals.
- Each year additional schools have become eligible as the concentration level phases in (75% in FY 21, 70% in FY 22, 65% in FY 23, 60% in FY 24 (this year) and the full phase-in of 55% in FY 25.
- Funding includes a personnel grant to support a community school coordinator and full-time health care coverage at each school. FY 24 = \$124M
- A per pupil grant provides funds for wraparound services to support community and student needs based on a required needs assessment. The per pupil grant phases up and begins the year after a school becomes eligible for a personnel grant. FY 24= \$103M
- The number of schools receiving concentration of poverty grants has increased from 202 in FY 20 to 358 in FY 24 and are in nearly every county (except Calvert and Queen Anne's).
- At full implementation 557 schools are projected to be eligible in nearly every county.

Pillar 5 Governance and Accountability

- The Blueprint requires MSDE, in collaboration with AIB, to develop a new financial management information system to track LEA revenues and expenditures to evaluate whether LEAs are meeting the new minimum school funding requirement established in the Blueprint.
- The MSDE contracted with PowerSchool to develop the new system, which will be operational in FY 24. LEAs will begin uploading data into the system monthly.
- This will enable the AIB and the MSDE to begin tracking LEA expenditures (budgeted and actual) to evaluate whether LEAs are meeting the minimum school funding requirement established by the Blueprint beginning in FY 25.
- Under the Blueprint, LEAs must demonstrate that at least 75% of most per pupil funding (100% of concentration of poverty and prekindergarten) received through the Blueprint formulas is being spent at the schools where students are enrolled each year. This is better known as the “money following students” provision.

Upcoming Work

As systems and structures have been established for the AIB, and as the Initial Blueprint Comprehensive Plan has been developed, the AIB is looking to our next rounds of work. These include a focus on providing technical assistance to the LEAs, including the Strategic Facilitator Grant Program, and to all State agencies and entities responsible for submitting an implementation plan; providing Blueprint outreach and training to a variety of stakeholders; collaborating with the MSDE to assist with a successful launch of the Expert Review Teams; continuing the Outcome Measures Workgroup; and developing expectations and the format for the five-year Blueprint implementation plans that will be due in Spring 2024.

The AIB's Second Annual Report will also include, among other activities, an update on initial Blueprint implementation plans submitted by LEAs and State agencies, including the review and approval process; updates to the Initial BCP; final Outcome Measures Workgroup recommendations; and recommendations for the 2024 legislative session.