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**BLUEPRINT FOR MARYLAND'S FUTURE
ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMPLEMENTATION BOARD**

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March 15, 2022

Delegate Maggie McIntosh, Chair
Delegate Ben Barnes, Subcommittee Chair
House Appropriations Committee

Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair
Delegate Alonzo T. Washington, Vice Chair
House Committee on Ways and Means

Dear Chair McIntosh, Atterbeary, Barnes, and Washington:

Thank you for your support of the changes to the Blueprint for Maryland's Future law that the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) recently proposed to the Governor and General Assembly by introducing **House Bill 1450**. The AIB focused its proposals on upcoming dates or issues with the law that need to be addressed immediately, i.e., in the current or next fiscal/school year. These include changes to the timeline for development and approval of various Blueprint implementation plans as well as the authority to carryforward unspent fiscal 2022 funds into fiscal 2023 for the AIB and other Blueprint programs receiving supplementary appropriations from fantasy gaming and sports betting revenues in fiscal 2022.

State Superintendent Mohammed Choudhury has proposed several additional changes to the Blueprint for Maryland's Future law as amendments to House Bill 1450. These proposals were fully presented by Superintendent Choudhury to the AIB on February 28. The AIB has considered the proposals through the same lens that it used to offer its initial proposed Blueprint changes, which is whether the changes need to be made now to address dates or issues in the current or next year. For proposed changes that are not an immediate concern, the AIB intends to fully review them as part of the Comprehensive Implementation Plan development process beginning later this spring. If the AIB, in working with its implementation partners including the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), local education agencies (LEAs), and other stakeholders, determines that further changes to the Blueprint law are needed, such as those proposed by MSDE, the AIB will include those legislative recommendations in its first annual report to the Governor and General Assembly in November 2022.

The AIB met to discuss the MSDE proposals on March 10, and agreed on the following recommendations for amendments to House Bill 1450 for your consideration. The table below summarizes the current law, MSDE proposals, and AIB recommendations.

Blueprint Law	MSDE Proposal	AIB Recommendation
<p>CCR Support Pathway begins in the 2022-2023 school year.</p> <p>Post-CCR Pathway begins in the 2023-2024 school year.</p>	<p>Delay CCR Support Pathway and Post-CCR Pathway to the 2024-2025 school year.</p>	<p>Revise CCR Support Pathway to begin in the 2023-2024 school year.</p> <p>Review further changes during the Comprehensive Plan process.</p>
<p>Automatic withholding of 25% of annual Blueprint funding <i>increase</i> for each LEA begins in FY 2023.</p> <p>Statutory criteria for AIB to release funds in FY 2023-2025 is based on submission <i>and</i> approval of LEA Blueprint implementation plan.</p>	<p>Delay automatic withholding to FY 2024.</p>	<p>Modify statutory criteria for AIB to release funds in FY 2023 to be based only on submission of an LEA Blueprint implementation plan by March 15, 2023, that meets minimum guidelines.</p>
<p>Calculation of the amount of funds withheld from LEAs each year is a portion of the increase provided over the prior fiscal year.</p>	<p>Make technical correction.</p>	<p>Clarify that the amount of funds to be withheld is based on the difference between the upcoming (or current) fiscal year and the current (or prior) fiscal year, e.g.,</p> <p>FY23 increase = (Total FY23 – Total FY22) * 25%</p>

First, the AIB is recommending that the implementation date for the College and Career Readiness (CCR) Support Pathway, which is to support students who are not CCR by the end of 10th grade, be revised from the 2022-2023 school year to the 2023-2024 school year. This provides LEAs with an additional year to develop the CCR Support Pathway, which is clearly not feasible for the upcoming school year particularly with LEAs continuing to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic and addressing learning loss. It also aligns the CCR Support Pathway with the Post-CCR Pathways' implementation date and MSDE's timeline for possible revision of the CCR standard in spring 2023, prior to the 2023-2024 school year. Attached is a slide from the AIB meeting that illustrates the AIB's proposed CCR timeline.

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AIB appreciates MSDE's proposal to take what it considers the amount of time needed to fully plan implementation of the CCR Pathways, and certainly shares MSDE's desire to get this critical component of the Blueprint right. However, the AIB also feels strongly that it must focus on getting Blueprint implementation back on track with the schedule stated in the law as quickly as feasible, and it was not prepared to delay implementation by two years as proposed by MSDE at this time. As stated above, it is possible that after further review the AIB may propose additional adjustments to the timeline for the 2023 legislative session.

Second, AIB is recommending that the criteria that AIB must use to determine whether to release automatically withheld LEA funds in fiscal 2023 be modified to be based on whether an LEA submits its Blueprint implementation plan by March 15, 2023, the revised deadline in House Bill 1450, and the plan meets the AIB's adopted guidelines for the LEA plans. While the AIB intends to review the LEAs plans for approval or disapproval, after receiving MSDE's recommendation, by June 2023, this will be at the end of the fiscal year and could result in LEAs not being able to spend the withheld funds in fiscal 2023. The AIB agrees with MSDE that this is a concern. In fiscal 2024 and 2025, funds would be released only if an LEA's plan had been approved by AIB as currently provided in the Blueprint law.

Finally, MSDE noted a potential drafting error in the Blueprint law that may make moot the automatic withholding of LEA funding increases annually. AIB recommends clarifying the law to avoid any misinterpretation of the legislative intent that funds be automatically withheld each year.

Thank you for considering these additional changes to the Blueprint law as amendments to House Bill 1450. If you have any questions, please contact me or Rachel Hise at AIB@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

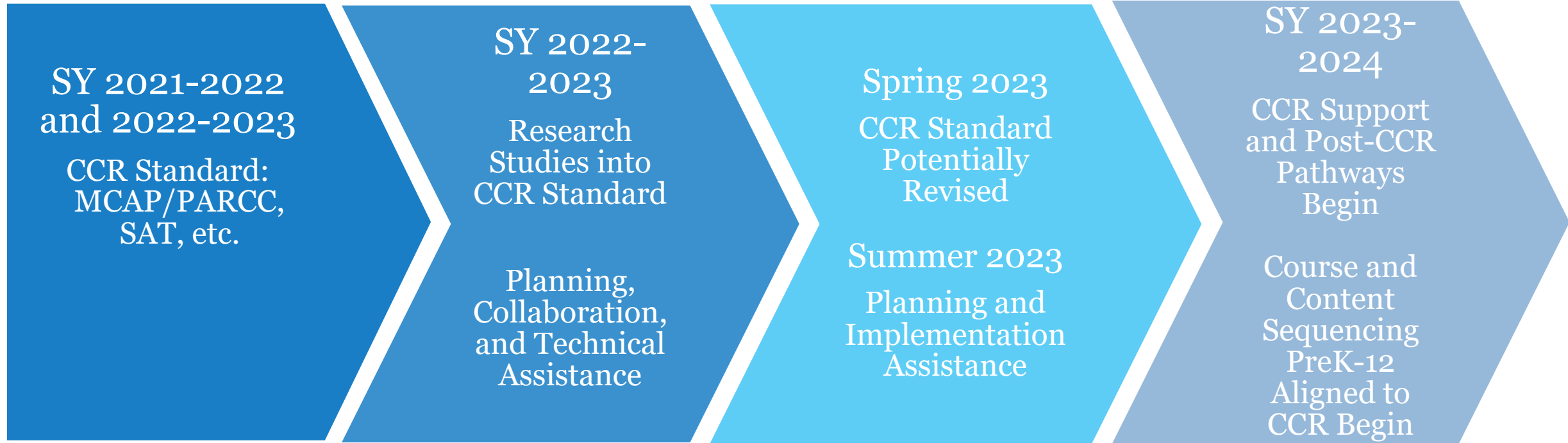
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Isiah Leggett', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Isiah Leggett

Attachment

cc: Members, Accountability and Implementation Board
Governor Larry J. Hogan
Speaker Adrienne A. Jones
President Bill Ferguson
Senator Paul G. Pinsky
Senator Guy Guzzone
State Superintendent Mohammed Choudhury

Proposed CCR Implementation Timeline



AIB Blueprint Comprehensive Plan development process – working with MSDE, LEAs, and other implementation partners – will include further discussion of CCR timeline and sequencing and may lead to additional proposed changes for the 2023 Legislative Session