



May 7, 2012

Dear Governor O'Malley, Senate President Miller and Speaker Busch:

We are writing to share our collective concern about the devastating impact the so-called “doomsday” budget would have on our three school systems and Maryland’s hard-earned standing as being “first in education.” As you prepare to gather for a special session of the General Assembly on May 14, we urge you to fully restore the Geographic Cost of Education Index (GCEI) and other formula funding for public education.

Our districts, combined, educate more than one-third of Maryland’s students and, within that, nearly two-thirds of the African American and Hispanic students in the state and more than half of the students who qualify for free and reduced-price meals. The elimination of \$93 million in GCEI funding would disproportionately harm our students, our ability to continue to narrow achievement gaps for those students who are minorities and poor, and student performance for the state as a whole.

Under the state’s Thornton formula in the past five years, our districts have received a majority of GCEI dollars that the state distributes to create equity in funding across jurisdictions. The GCEI offsets funding in districts where the cost of living—and, by extension, the cost of educating children—is higher. During those same five years, our three districts combined have shown significant student achievement gains—gains that have improved the educational and life prospects of tens of thousands of children and gone a long way to moving us toward financial and educational equity for our kids. These gains have also contributed heavily to Maryland’s continued status as having the best public education system in the country.

For instance, Maryland is rightfully proud of its position as a national leader in Advanced Placement participation and performance. Since 2007, the number of AP exams taken by Maryland students has increased 35 percent. Our three districts, combined, have accounted for about half of the state’s AP growth, having increased the number of AP exams taken by more than 40 percent since 2007.

And the GCEI funding has been critical to making this success happen; most importantly, it has been essential to our ability to deliver the education our students need and deserve. The elimination of the GCEI would be a huge setback in the gains our students have made.

Collectively, our three districts would sustain 73 percent of what would be a \$128.8 million cut to public education.

If we are to ensure that our students graduate from high school prepared for the workforce of the 21st century, and if we are to grow the pool of workers trained to enter the fast-emerging STEM professions in our state, then we cannot retreat on education funding. If we are to make good on our commitment to educating children equitably, regardless of their geographic location, we must maintain, and even increase, our investment in education. As our state's leaders, you have demonstrated your commitment to education time and again. We ask you to maintain that commitment to our students during the special session.

Sincerely,



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