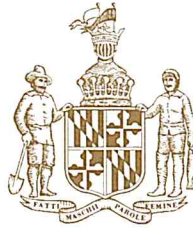


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**County Council Should Focus Efforts on Providing Sufficient Resources for Schools  
not Criticizing how MCPS Invests in Schools**

The most recent Office of Legislative Oversight Report, *Resources and Staffing among MCPS Schools*, raises an issue that was debated and resolved in 2002 by the Commission on Education Finance, Equity, and Excellence (also known as the Thornton Commission after its respected chair, Dr. Alvin Thornton). Having attended every public meeting of the commission, I know firsthand that one of the commission's goals was to find ways to give school districts more flexibility in using state funding, not less. The commission collapsed 27 highly prescriptive state funding categories into four broad formulas to provide school districts the flexibility to better address the needs of all students and to do so in way that best met the individual needs of each district. That is why this new OLO report is so unhelpful.

The OLO report mischaracterizes the requirements of the state's compensatory aid formula to mask the impact of the county government's reduction in per pupil funding for MCPS. It sows division when there needs to be community collaboration and engagement to sustain the policies and programs needed to close the achievement gap. It needlessly second-guesses policy decisions of the school board to prioritize funding initiatives during this fiscally challenged time.

Montgomery County Public Schools differentiates funding for its most impacted schools and devotes millions of dollars to closing the achievement gap. It has continued to make strides and protect resources even though the last seven years have been an extraordinary economic challenge. In my opinion, the school system should be commended for its ongoing efforts to equitably distribute resources. The Council should be looking for additional resources to invest because we have no higher priority than making sure all children get the best possible education.

The state has been doing its part as state aid for our schools has gone up by about \$1,000 per student since 2009 thanks to the way the Bridge to Excellence Act restructured the state's funding formulas. During the same period, the Council has reduced per student funding by \$1,500. If the county had been held to the state's Maintenance of Effort requirement strictly, funding for MCPS would be at least \$225 million more than the current budget. Unfortunately, the OLO report does not consider the impact of this difficult decision on the school system's performance.

Having reviewed the OLO report, I would urge my colleagues on the County Council to summarily dismiss any further advocacy about returning to an old, outdated, and overly restricted method of allocating state aid and focus on finding ways to ensure that our schools have the resources they need to meet the needs of every single student. Our children deserve nothing less.

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