



## **Expanding Opportunity from Cradle to Career in Maryland**

Maryland's public schools unlocked a world of opportunity for my family and me. Both of my parents were Baltimore City school educators, and I am the only gubernatorial candidate who attended Maryland public schools from kindergarten through 12th grade. My Maryland public school education allowed me to go from Woodlawn to the White House, where I led First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let Girls Learn" initiative. A child's potential should not be limited by their zip code, which is why my top priority as Governor will be to ensure that *every* child in Maryland has access to a world class public education.

Maryland's public schools were once the envy of the nation. Under the previous Democratic Administration, they were ranked #1 best in America for five years in a row. Today, they're headed in the wrong direction, thanks to three years of underfunding and neglect. Too many students are still being asked to learn in temporary learning trailers instead of modern classrooms. Too many sit in decaying classrooms instead of modern, state-of-the-art facilities. Too many classes are overcrowded. Sadly, this is nothing new in Maryland. Growing up, I remember my father buying classroom supplies because the school couldn't afford to, and I remember trying to learn in sweltering heat at Woodlawn High because we didn't have air conditioning.

We've learned the difference it can make for our kids when we have a friend of public education in Government House. I know we can do better. When I'm Governor we will.

How? By investing more and not less. By fixing the funding inequities. By giving every family access to universal Pre-K. By putting a new priority on STEM education. And by ending childhood hunger in Maryland.

### **Funding Our Public Schools**

Only half of Maryland students are meeting math and English requirements, many schools are crumbling, and our teachers are over-worked and underpaid (1 out of 7 teachers leave the public schools every year). Despite being one of the wealthiest states in the nation, we rank outside the top 15 in per pupil spending, and the Kirwan Commission estimates Maryland is underinvesting in our public schools by nearly \$3 billion. In recent years, Maryland public schools have dropped in the national rankings as direct state funding has decreased.

As Governor my top priority will be eliminating the achievement gap and providing universal access to world-class public schools. The path is clear. We need to combine political will and dedicated funding mechanisms, like social impact bonds, to invest in priorities like school infrastructure, STEM education, better teacher pay, and universal full-day pre-K.

### **Universal, Full-Day Pre-K**

Attending pre-kindergarten classes can mean the difference between excelling in school or being left behind—and right now nearly 1 of 3 Maryland four-year-olds do not attend pre-K. Studies have shown that low-income students who do not attend pre-K start school more than six months behind in reading and math skills. Attending pre-k can close the achievement gap and set children up for success. In addition, pre-K is the best economic investment we can make. \$1 spent on enrolling a child in pre-K yields \$8 in additional income for low-income families and saves the state \$19-\$38 in future spending.

My administration will provide *all* Maryland four-year olds with access to high-quality, full-day early education, so they enter kindergarten ready to learn, read, and succeed. To achieve this goal, we will provide funding to local school districts to increase four-year old pre-K slots at public elementary schools. We will further increase state funding for Maryland cities and community-based organizations that support high-quality pre-K programs.

Universal access to high quality pre-K is a promise that I will gladly make to every working parent who wants their child to start off on the right foot, and to every Maryland child, regardless of where they live.

### **No More Hungry Kids**

One out of six Maryland children are not getting enough to eat. That's 140,000 kids who cannot give their teachers their full attention because they are too hungry to focus. Maryland already has nationally acclaimed school lunch and breakfast programs, but we need to make sure that it is reaching the kids who need it most. We must guarantee a school day that includes hot, healthy breakfast and lunch, every single day for every child. This investment will cost less than \$5 million dollars and make a world of difference.

### **21st Century STEM Education**

In a world where technology is always advancing and new career pathways often have a technology focus, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) education is increasingly important. I will invest an average of \$50,000 in every Maryland primary and secondary school to ensure our kids, and our teachers, have the resources they need to learn. We must properly invest in and support rigorous STEM curricula in our K-12 public schools, to spark our students' interests early. Computer literacy, math, and science now rival basic competencies like reading comprehension and writing as the key indicators of a student's college and career readiness. The children of Maryland cannot fall behind. Making these opportunities available for all students, and reducing the gender and racial disparities in STEM programs, will go far in giving every Maryland student the skills they need to succeed.

### **Free Community College and Career Training**

Community colleges and technical programs provide opportunities to Marylanders of every age and income level. These programs are critical to building a dynamic workforce and serve as a gateway to the middle class. Yet Maryland spends four times more on prisons and public safety than on our community colleges. Each year, nearly 500,000 Marylanders enroll in two-year degree programs, workforce training, or continuing education classes at one of the state's 16 community colleges. But as state funding support for community colleges decline, community college tuition costs climb, making access to the middle class less and less affordable.

Making community college and retaining programs free will be a top priority of my administration to ensure that every Marylander, regardless of their age or expertise, can access the skills they need to secure better-paying jobs. We will establish a statewide "college promise program" that will provide funding for tuition and fees to all students in public, two-year institutions across the state. This opportunity will also be available to all mid-career members of the workforce participating in various workforce training programs or continuing education classes.

Community college students with jobs must also be able to continue their studies without breaking the bank or sacrificing their current employment. To do this, we will establish a state micro-grant program to support two-year students' transportation expenses. A little extra support to help fund travel between home, work, and school — all in time to help with dinner or spend time family — will make a challenging schedule just a little bit easier. This small transportation stipend would match any pre-existing federal work-study funds that students currently receive, making a quality higher education affordable for all Marylanders.

### **Affordable 4-Year College**

The average Maryland college graduate leaves campus with nearly \$30,000 in debt. We will make college more affordable for all by providing 1% state-provided student loans, because no student's income should be deny them the opportunity to attend college and companies should not profit off students working to further their education.

## **Preventing Campus Sexual Assault**

The disturbing reality is that college-age women are 3 to 4 times more likely to experience sexual violence, yet too often survivors remain afraid to step forward and action is too rarely taken when they do. On college campuses, we must take steps to prevent sexual violence by proactively addressing the cultural norms of misogyny and objectification, while establishing, communicating, and enforcing clear guidelines on consent.