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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## **Maryland State Board of Education Statement Regarding Blueprint Implementation Plans**

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) appreciates the relationship that it has built with the Blueprint Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB). Both agencies are charged through the Blueprint for Maryland's Future with ensuring transformational changes to create a world class statewide educational system, successful outcomes for Maryland's children, and a more dynamic economic future.

The AIB and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) are staffed by hard-working individuals who are doing their best to deliver the needed educational transformation envisioned by the law. Missteps of this nature are inevitable given the policymaking/oversight structure of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, with overlapping responsibilities. This structure is not optimal for leading a transformation of this nature and sets up occasional disputes between the two agencies and potentially with the State Board. When missteps occur, they unnerve and confuse the broader educational community.

With respect to the AIB's letter to the local education agencies (LEAs), State Superintendent Mohammed Choudhury and MSDE created a well-designed and rigorous review process consistent with the AIB-approved Criteria for Success. MSDE discussed its rigorous Implementation Plan review and recommendation process with AIB staff numerous times. MSDE also invited AIB staff (or others suggested by the AIB) to join the MSDE's review process (see a brief description of the Implementation Plan Review process in the appendix). The AIB declined to participate with MSDE in the reviews.

MSDE then complied with its statutory responsibility to evaluate each LEA's Blueprint Implementation Plan, which is set forth in Education Article §5-404, Annotated Code of Maryland:

*(b)(3)(i) On or before September 1, 2022, the Department shall develop criteria to be used to recommend approval or disapproval of local school system implementation plans and release of funds under this subtitle.*

*(ii) The criteria shall be submitted for approval to the Board.*

***(c)(1)(ii) Each local school system shall submit a copy of its plan to the Department for review and a recommendation of approval or disapproval.***

*(c)(3) An implementation plan submitted to the Board for approval under this section shall be:*

*(i) Consistent with the developed guidelines and, if applicable, the approved criteria under subsection (b) of this section.*

MSDE reviewed each LEA's Blueprint Implementation Plan using its rigorous review process and gave LEAs feedback and technical assistance to improve their plans. MSDE provided the AIB with its review comments for each LEA.

MSDE's Blueprint implementation team members have proactively engaged with AIB staff regularly and with great frequency since the AIB became operational to facilitate continued and appropriate collaboration and discussion related to supporting LEAs through Blueprint planning and implementation. These meetings are designed to increase the volume of collaboration around key topics such as implementation planning materials, technical assistance, and the review process for LEAs' Initial Blueprint Implementation Plans.

The State Board and MSDE remain committed to working with the AIB within the current statutory framework to deliver transformative educational outcomes for all of Maryland's children and to help make Maryland the best place to live, learn, and succeed.



## Appendix

### Legislative Authority

As of April 24, 2023, the Maryland State Department of Education has conducted a review of each LEA's Blueprint Implementation Plan using the AIB-approved [Criteria for Success](#) to recommend approval or disapproval to the Accountability and Implementation Board as statutorily required in [MD Code, Ed. §5-404](#):

*(b)(3)(i) On or before September 1, 2022, the Department shall develop criteria to be used to recommend approval or disapproval of local school system implementation plans and release of funds under this subtitle.*

*(ii) The criteria shall be submitted for approval to the Board.*

***(c)(1)(ii) Each local school system shall submit a copy of its plan to the Department for review and a recommendation of approval or disapproval.***

*(c)(3) An implementation plan submitted to the Board for approval under this section shall be:*

*(i) Consistent with the developed guidelines and, if applicable, the approved criteria under subsection (b) of this section*

### Training and Review Process

Consistent with its legislative mandate, MSDE conducted an independent review of each LEA Blueprint Implementation Plan to recommend approval or disapproval to the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB). The teams tasked with reviewing LEAs' plan submissions to inform MSDE's recommendations of approval reflected the diversity of Maryland public school students and included individuals from the following groups:

- MSDE staff directly responsible for the Blueprint implementation planning with LEAs;
- MSDE staff supporting the implementation of individual Blueprint pillars;
- National experts with deep experience in implementing equity-driven, research based, transformative educational practices proven to be successful and who are approved partners for Maryland Leads; and
- Members of the MSDE Expert Review Team, a team of individuals who support the ongoing assessment of Blueprint implementation efforts.

As mentioned, members of the AIB staff (or others nominated by the AIB) were invited to participate in the MSDE review process as reviewers, however, the AIB declined the invitation to participate.

Rating consistency across LEA plans was of paramount importance when reviewing the Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan submissions. Based on the importance of ensuring that each LEA's Blueprint Implementation Plan is fairly and consistently scored against the AIB-approved Criteria for Success, MSDE ensured that each reviewer was properly trained and had no conflicts of interest.

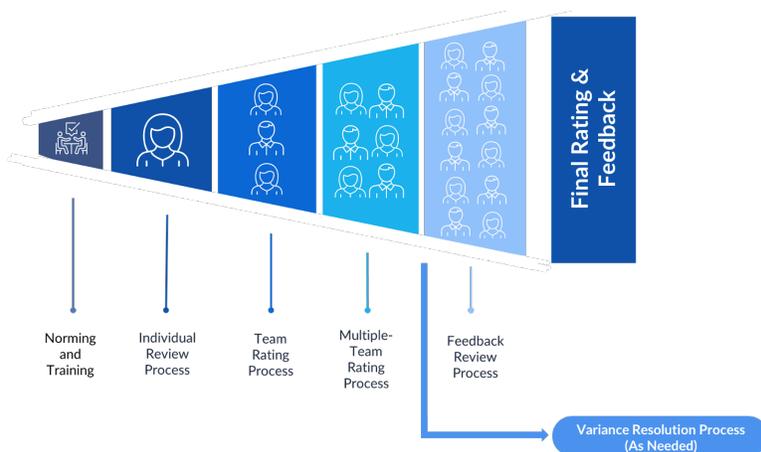
In total, each review team member received approximately eight hours of training on how to rate the Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan submissions, rooted in consistently applying the approved Criteria for Success and providing feedback to LEAs. Each LEA plan was then reviewed by each reviewer individually, and then by two teams of three reviewers before a final rating and feedback were determined (see Figure 1).

The training and review process for Review Team members included:

- Multiple norming sessions focused on applying the Criteria For Success and drafting feedback;

- Individual, small group, and large-group rating sessions;
- Multiple-team reviews to ensure that all feedback to LEAs was aligned to the Criteria for Success, clear, direct, and concise; and
- An additional separate process for resolving any rating variance between teams.

**Figure 1: Review Process for Individual LEAs’ Initial Blueprint Implementation Plans**



### Results and Next Steps for LEAs

The Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan Template had 164 questions for each LEA to answer. The responses to these questions were rated against the 63 Criteria for Success statements. Each criterion was given a rating of “Meets Criteria”, “Partially Meets Criteria”, or “Does Not Meet Criteria”. LEAs that did not receive “Meets Criteria” for each criterion also received feedback for each criterion with guidance on how to revise their response to meet the stated criteria.

After sharing the review results, MSDE offered to meet with each LEA so that there was a common understanding of the feedback provided, expectations of the revisions needed, and the process for resubmitting Initial Blueprint Implementation Plans. Once plans are resubmitted to the MSDE, LEAs will continue to receive feedback and meet with MSDE staff until all questions in the Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan receive a rating of “Meets Criteria” according to the Criteria for Success.

### Submission Timeline

The table below outlines the timeline and major activities for the revision process, including submission dates of recommendations to AIB. MSDE will only submit recommendations for approval for plans that meet all criteria. In addition to these MSDE recommendations, the AIB will also complete a full review of the Blueprint Implementation Plans and may request additional updates to the plans before approval.

Revision Group	LEAs Revise Plans	MSDE Reviews Plans	MSDE Submits Recommendations to AIB
1	April 26 - May 9	May 10 - May 15	May 16
2*	May 16 - May 30	May 31 - June 5	June 6
3*	June 6 - June 20	June 21 - June 26	June 27

\*If necessary.