



Summary

Arts Education in Maryland Schools (AEMS) envisions a public education system in Maryland that supports, cultivates, nurtures, and uplifts ALL students' creativity through a robust arts education experience so that they can thrive in a healthy society.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation states that the personnel and per pupil grant may be used through fiscal year 2027 to provide the programs required under COMAR 13A.04, which includes 13.04.16.01: Programs in Fine Arts.

AEMS seeks to eliminate the sunset timeline in the law to ensure that arts education is protected in perpetuity as a critical component of the world-class education every student deserves.

Bill Citation

(2022, HB1450, §5-223(c)(9), Pg. 3) [Link](#)

Bill Text

"The personnel and per pupil grant may be used through fiscal year [2025] **2027** to provide the programs required under COMAR TITLE 13A, SUBTITLE 04, INCLUDING 13A.04.16.01"

Corroboration

[Comprehensive Blueprint Implementation Plan](#) section 3.1.1b: "Blueprint law specifically authorizes the use of Foundation formula funds and Concentration of Poverty grant funds (through FY27) for LEAs to meet the requirements of Code of Maryland Regulations: Title 13A, Subtitle 04, SPECIFIC SUBJECTS, including 13A.04.16.01, which includes the arts."

Proposed Alteration

"The personnel and per pupil grant may be used ~~through fiscal year [2025]~~ **2027** to provide the programs required under COMAR TITLE 13A, SUBTITLE 04, INCLUDING 13A.04.16.01"

Rationale

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future aspires to transform Maryland's public education system into a world class public education system, yet it is not clear that Maryland's public schools have been able to meet requirements of COMAR to deliver core content areas that predate the Blueprint's additional mandates and aspirations. As an example, despite [COMAR 13A.04.16.01](#)'s requirement for arts that students have access to all 5 arts disciplines of Dance, Media Arts, Music, Theatre, and Visual Arts in grades Pre-K through 12, only 2/3 of Maryland LEAs offer dance (and not at all grade levels), theatre is not offered at all grade levels, and only 1/4 of LEAs offers courses in media arts.¹

¹ According to the [Maryland Arts Education Data Project](#), which details staffing and course information from the Maryland State Department of Education.



In this attempt to transform Maryland's public education system, **there should not be a time restriction on funding that would allow Maryland's public schools to fulfill their basic, statutory commitments.** Even as the Blueprint aspires to enhance Maryland's public education, without adequate funding being directed towards fulfilling the requirements of COMAR these enhancements are built on an unstable foundation. Removing the sunset from this provision that allows base funding formula dollars to be used to fulfill COMAR's requirements ensures that students receive, at a minimum, the baseline education to which state regulations entitle them.

This is not just about fulfilling requirements; the requirements exist because **arts education is critical and transformative for our students.** The arts offer unique ways to learn, connect, and engage with the world around us, unlocking all different parts of the brain and helping us find a sense of belonging. The arts help children become the best versions of themselves while also preparing them for college and career. When children learn through arts experiences, not only are they more likely to develop strong reading and math skills, but they are also more likely to develop social-emotional skills that will help them thrive in all aspects of their lives. Music education, for example, especially early on in a child's schooling, boosts neuroplasticity, synchronizes the brain's cerebral hemispheres, and strengthens neural pathways; all of which produce long-lasting impacts on the brain.²

The importance of the arts is enshrined in both national and state law, including in the Every Student Succeeds Act's definition of a required well-rounded education. Despite these benefits, the value of the arts is chronically underappreciated, and last year's school system budget battles showed how the arts are frequently the casualty of "hard decisions" in budgeting. In Howard County, the state's only 3rd grade strings program was in danger of being cut until local advocates intervened; in Frederick County, 4th and 5th grade instrumental music were only saved by massive public outcry. And even so, the need to balance the books led to one of the County's few dance teachers leaving, terminating that high school's entire dance program. **If the ability to use Blueprint funds to meet COMAR is sunset, the position of the arts will grow even more perilous in Maryland's public school budgets.**

² "[*Music for Every Child*](#)," *San Francisco Conservatory of Music*, 2020.