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Subject: Up the Street - June 3
Date: Friday, June 03, 2016 4:42:16 PM

Up the Street: MSEA Legislative Updates

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June 3, 2016; Issue 115

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Due to popular demand and a recognition that education policy-making continues when the state legislature is not in session, we will be continuing *Up the Street* once a month during the interim, and then back to each week during the 2017 General Assembly session.

MARYLAND EDUCATION NEWS

Dr. Karen Salmon Named Next State Superintendent of Schools

On May 24, the Maryland State Board of Education announced its choice of Dr. Karen Salmon for state superintendent of schools, in an acting role starting June 1 and then permanently on July 1. For Dr. Salmon, it's a promotion from her previous role as one of MSDE's interim deputy superintendents focused on college and career readiness. Many of you may know her from her decade-long tenure as superintendent of Talbot County Public Schools. A staunch supporter of using technology in the classroom, she has repeatedly highlighted her universal laptop policy in Talbot.

MSEA President Betty Weller released a statement in response to the announcement, saying in part, "We hope that Dr. Salmon will serve as an independent, apolitical voice for research-based solutions that help all students rather than reinforce the narrow policy focus of the Hogan administration and his State Board on charter schools and private schools." It was covered by the *Baltimore Sun*, *Washington Post*, *WBALTV*, *Star Democrat*, and *Montgomery Community Media*.

The Hogan School Board

Last month, Gov. Hogan quietly appointed his newest member of the State Board of Education, **Laurie Halverson** from Montgomery County, giving him a majority of appointees on the K-12 education governing body. Halverson is a parent and Republican activist who lost her bid for Montgomery County Board of Education in 2014. **You can read all of her opinions on education, including that "the teachers union...is too strong" and we should "find a way to work around the teachers union" here.** She joins other Gov. Hogan appointments to the State Board in supporting his education privatization agenda:

- *Chester Finn*: A longtime advocate for charter schools and private school vouchers, Finn served at the conservative-leaning Fordham Institute from 1997 to 2014 and co-founded the for-profit education group Edison Learning. **He recently put his beliefs on display in an article about how worried he is that Donald Trump could create a wave of Democratic victories in state legislatures**, causing charter schools and private school

voucher programs to suffer setbacks.

- *Andy Smarick*: Partner at Bellwether Education Partners, a non-profit group that works to push charter schools and voucher policies in the name of helping at-risk students. He's a longtime advocate for replacing urban public school districts with all-charter districts, as he proposes in his book, *The Urban School System of the Future*. He also helped found the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.
- *Laura Weeldreyer*: Now the senior consultant at UPD Consulting, where she advises states and districts on turnaround schools, Weeldreyer used to lead Baltimore City Public School's Office of Charter Schools.
- *Stephanie Iszard*: Principal of Cornerstone Christian Academy, a religious private school in Bowie.

Gov. Hogan has also appointed **Michele Jenkins Guyton**, a special education advocate and former professor, and selects the student member of the board each year.

Hogan Withholds Funding From Schools...Again

Last month, Gov. Hogan and **Comptroller Peter Franchot** escalated their crusade to make Baltimore County and Baltimore City schools spend their limited school construction dollars on temporary window unit air-conditioning instead of the longer-lasting and more effective central air. In a May 11 Board of Public Works meeting, Hogan and Franchot teamed up to pass a motion to withhold \$10 million in school construction funds from Baltimore County and \$5 million from Baltimore City until they present a plan to install window unit air-conditioning. In response to the Board of Public Works interfering with standard school construction decision-making, **David Lever, the 13-year executive director of the Interagency Committee on School Construction**, resigned his position in protest, writing, **"I find that I cannot be a party to this degradation of a school construction program that I have worked hard to advance in professionalism and comprehensiveness."**

The Baltimore Sun editorial board held no punches in criticizing the **Hogan-Franchot move**, writing, "Yes, that's right, Messrs. Hogan and Franchot withheld money for air conditioning to force Baltimore County to install air conditioning," before penning, "Astonishing is one word for it. Shameful, foolish, petulant, juvenile and cynical would be others. The parents of every child in Maryland public schools now need to ask, if Governor Hogan and Comptroller Franchot were willing to do this, what's next?"

So if you're counting at home, that's now \$83 million of funding that Gov. Hogan has unilaterally decided to withhold from public schools because of his brand of petty politics.

State Testing Commission Nearing Recommendations

The state testing commission met twice in May, with its subcommittees beginning to draft recommendations that will ultimately go on to advise local school boards, the State Board of Education, and the General Assembly on how to reduce standardized testing. Commission members spent a lot of time discussing elimination of a future social studies state test and ways to lessen the disruption caused by the PARCC assessment. Due to the advocacy work of MSEA, the commission is also discussing a recommendation that school systems form local testing committees, including educators as selected by local education associations, to analyze the

district's current testing program and recommend reductions to the district board of education.

You can read more about the last meeting here. The next commission meeting will take place on June 8.

CAMPAIGN 2016 (and 2018)

Hogan Senior Adviser Leaves to Run Re-Election Campaign Organization

On May 19, **Steve Crim**—who co-founded Change Maryland with Larry Hogan in 2011—resigned from his position as director of public affairs to take a role in a “nonprofit associated with the governor.” Crim was Hogan’s campaign manager in 2014 and it is widely understood that his work now will be building Hogan’s re-election effort, either on the campaign side or as part of a dark-money super PAC.

Hillary Nears Democratic Nomination, Calls Trump’s Ideas “Dangerously Incoherent”

Expected to clinch the Democratic nomination on June 7, Hillary Clinton has turned her campaign messaging towards Donald Trump, the soon-to-be Republican nominee for president. A day after Trump was mired in stories about his fraudulent Trump University, Clinton delivered a strong attack on Trump’s dangerous policy positions, temperament, and rhetoric during a foreign policy address in San Diego. Educator unions will be a pivotal ally of Clinton’s in her effort to make sure working families vote for a labor champion. **Sign up to become an Educator for Hillary today.**

For a pdf version of this edition of *Up the Street*, [click here](#).

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