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School funding generally—MEP has historically been interested in this sort of topic. But I only took over as faculty director this past year. I have a broad knowledge of how schools are funded. You can probably find that figure directly. Lots of researchers have used because it has been available. Tons of disparities in funding. A bulk of funding – about 45% comes from local property taxes, another 45% come from state sources – this is on average nationally – wealthier locations generally are able to raise more money, and the state offsets that. Say like, for example, Montgomery County and Prince George’s County are wealthier counties. In order to recruit the same higher quality teachers and resources, they want to have higher per student expense figures. You would probably want them to be higher in more resource-constrained environments in more diverse communities. Historically in Maryland, that has not been the case. Per people expenditures in Maryland were pretty regressive—weren’t necessarily spending more for students in Prince George’s County vs Montgomery County. All of this is likely to change around this Commission in Excellence in Education. In part an effort to revisit state funding and more equitable.

There was somebody’s name attached to it. Legislation expired from circa 2000. There was a commission that was studying this. Not just an increase in per pupil expenditures. Many of those recommendations. Several were passed by the Maryland legislature in 2019 earlier this year. Now it’s a question of where the money is going to come from. Gov. Hogan has made some public comments about concerns about funding. Per pupil expenditures can come from the state, or it’s about raising property taxes. Governors traditionally do not like to raise property taxes, even if they know it’s going to a good source.

Largely driven by local property taxes. Montgomery County makes sense that it’s towards the top. The state level funding that was meant to offset some of those inequities expired about 10 years ago. It’s hard to disentangle a lot of this. We know Montgomery County’s student is diverse and pretty wealthy, but with a lot of disparities in individual schools. You also have a few very, very large school districts in Maryland. There are certainly differences in wealth of those districts, but there are also lots of variations. There are differences in what individual schools are spending within these areas.

The state would aim to offset differences between more or less well resources communities as far as their property taxes. We want to see more money go into more diverse communities. That is what gets you to be able to recruit teachers to harder to staff schools. And that is true. MC is more diverse than districts on the Eastern Shore. And it’s getting more money than counties on the eastern shore. Montgomery County is also wealthier overall.

Maryland is going to be starting to release information on spending at the school level to create more transparency around this heterogeneity on spending in the districts. That figure masks heterogeneity between individual schools in larger, diverse counties. It probably is less of an issue in terms of smaller districts because of fewer differences in wealth. They have different amounts of resources.

The MEP has focused primarily on describing patterns and trends in things like enrollment, etc. in Maryland public schools with the purpose of informing policy debates like K-12 student enrollment. We want to take a little bit of a shift toward longer or more in-depth research studies. Shift from reporting data to asking research questions, focusing around three big topic: teachers—what are the sorts of teachers that we need to get into schools, what are the best ways to recruit them, ensure that we have a diverse teacher workforce in MD. Schools: how changing demographics of student populations and exposure to more diverse peers influences academic and longer-term outcome. Communities in which schools operate: school community partnerships, how we can engage communities and parents in schools, resources that communities bring above and beyond what schools provide for academic and non-academic success. There are large effects of peers, and diversity in schools can very much be an asset.