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BILL: Senate Bill 661
TITLE: Primary and Secondary Education – Community Schools - Established
DATE: March 6, 2019
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
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Senate Bill 661 establishes community schools in the State; requiring a community school to have a community school coordinator and a community school leadership team; requiring the community school leadership team to conduct a certain assessment of needs and assets and to develop a certain implementation plan; requiring the community school leadership team, in cooperation with the community school coordinator, to oversee the implementation of the plan; authorizing local school systems to form a school-community partnership; etc.

PSSAM opposes Senate Bill 661. We do not believe that now is the time to enact legislation on establishing Community Schools since we are waiting for the Kirwan Commission recommendations.

In June 2016, the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (Kirwan Commission) was established by the legislature (Senate Bill 905). Since that date, the Commission has been working tirelessly to redefine Maryland's current educational policies and practices. The Commission has called for an expansion of pre-K programs, increased teacher pay, more rigorous certification requirements for teachers (including pre-K teachers), and a series of other reforms and initiatives. Among other reforms and initiatives recommended by the Commission is the requirement to establish Community Schools for the purpose of addressing the needs of students and their families and building on and strengthening community resources near the school.

The Kirwan Commission's preliminary report put forth recommendations for legislative and policy initiatives to increase the availability of innovative educational opportunities as well as adequate and equitable funding. The Commission's final report will provide specificity and strategic recommendations regarding the establishment of community schools. Therefore, we again state that now is not the time to legislate action on Community Schools. PSSAM believes that a more prudent path would be to wait until the release of the final Kirwan Commission recommendations and funding regarding establishing or expanding Community Schools in Maryland.

For the reasons stated above, PSSAM **opposes** Senate Bill 661 and recommends an unfavorable committee report.