Recently Approved Legislation and Funding

Maine

In April, Senator Rebecca Millett's bill, "An Act to Create Community Schools," was introduced with strong and favorable support during a public hearing in the state's Education Committee. The measure, LD 956, allows an existing or new school to be a community school and authorizes the state Department of Education to designate five community schools as part of a 5-year pilot project beginning in the 2016-2017 school year. The state commissioner also provide state funding to the schools with a $250,000 maximum in annual allocations.

Minnesota

In Minnesota, SF 1206 states that the commissioner shall provide funding to eligible school sites to plan, implement, and improve full-service community schools. Through these newly established funds, schools will receive up to $100,000 annually, including required money for the hiring of a community school coordinator. To find out more about the bill, click here.

District of Columbia

Signed in 2012, the District of Columbia’s Community Schools Incentive Act of 2012 provided $1 million to six grantees (consortiums of schools and community partners) for the implementation of community schools in 11 schools in the District of Columbia. The Act was created as a component of the Raising the Expectations for Education Outcomes Omnibus Act of 2012.

In May 2014, the D.C. Council approved $1 million for FY 2015 through committee markups to continue the program and set it up for expansion into more schools.

West Virginia
In July 2014, the West Virginia Board of Education approved a policy framework endorsing community schools for statewide implementation. This builds on the Board’s approval last year for a community schools plan for McDowell County Public Schools, West Virginia, as part of the Reconnecting McDowell effort championed by Board president Gayle Manchin and partners including AFT. The development of community schools in West Virginia was authorized under a 2012 state law establishing "collaborative innovation zones."

**Tennessee**

In May 2014, Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam signed into law the Tennessee Community Schools Act. Introduced by Rep. Gloria Johnson of Knoxville, a special education teacher, and by state Sen. Lowe Finney, this bill authorizes and encourages districts and community partners to establish community schools. It does not appropriate funds but offers a platform on which to build. This is exciting news considering the work going on in Nashville and Knoxville to grow community schools.

**Maryland**

The Maryland General Assembly approved $1.2 billion for city school construction, providing a valuable opportunity to deepen our community schools work in Baltimore through partners like Family League and Elev8 Baltimore. Officials and community school practitioners in Baltimore visited Cincinnati’s Community Learning Centers to learn from the redesign of their public schools as community schools. Read this Baltimore Sun article from a community advocate on how this funding could lead to neighborhood transformation.

**New Mexico**

In early 2013, Governor Susana Martinez signed the Community Schools Act, which amends the Public School Code to include community schools. This bill allows districts to use funds to transform "priority" or "focus" (low-performing) schools into community schools, with the goals of improving school climate and/or student achievement and growth, as well as creating incentives to grow and sustain community partnerships that contribute to improved school climate and/or student achievement and growth. House Majority Leader Rick Miera and Sen. Cisco McSorley’s support of the bill was crucial.
**New York**

In January 2013, Governor Cuomo established a New York Education Reform Commission that recommended community schools as a strategy to improve schools in neighborhoods in some of New York's neediest areas. As a result, Cuomo proposed a $15 million competitive grant to implement community schools across the state, which was approved in the budget. Called the Community Schools Initiative, 30 grantees (school districts and NYC non-profits that apply on behalf of the district) received 3-year grants in December 2013 to establish community schools. A similar momentum is seen in New York City with new Mayor Bill De Blasio launching an unprecedented 128 community schools across the city as his chosen strategy for school turnaround in particular.

**Connecticut**

In 2013, Connecticut legislators passed SB 1002, "An Act Concerning Community Schools." The act provides explicit instructions for community school startup and operations, as well as adds the community school model as a turnaround model for failing schools. According to the Act, eligible school districts will be able to identify two elementary schools and one high school within their district to become a community school. These schools will include a resource coordinator that will conduct an audit of the schools' resources and community's needs.

The push for the bill was led by both of the state teacher unions - Connecticut Federation of Teachers and the Connecticut Education Association - and the state Senate president, the mayor of Hartford, and the state chapter of the NAACP. Hartford Mayor Pedro Segarra testified in support of the bill with suggestions for a stronger focus on student success being a focal point and the creation of autonomous local governing boards in charge of full-service schools. Hartford has had success in raising standardized test scores amongst its students in its community schools.

**Michigan**

Michigan Governor Rick Snyder announced a new plan, Pathways to Potential, to transform blighted neighborhoods into vibrant neighborhoods anchored by community schools. This state-wide effort is modeled after a successful community school initiative in Grand Rapids called Kent School Services Network.
The plan empowers communities to transform blighted properties and vacant lots back into productive, communal use, including establishing neighborhoods schools that will serve as hubs for their communities. These neighborhoods will be targeted for housing rehabilitation and community beautification efforts with the community school becoming the focal point of the community.

Nine Detroit Public Schools are targeted to be a part of the program beginning with the struggling Morningside neighborhood. State social workers will be placed in each school. Family Resource Centers will also be established at each school.