

Testimony before the House Appropriations Committee

House Bill 428: Community Schools - Rental Assistance for Community School Families Program and Fund - Establishment February 6, 2024 ****Support****

On behalf of the Social Work in Schools Committee of the National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter, we would like to express our support for House Bill 428: Community Schools - Rental Assistance for Community School Families Program and Fund – Establishment.

NASW is the largest national organization of the profession, representing over 120,000 social workers nationwide, with 17,000 licensed in the state of Maryland. Our committee includes school social workers serving in school systems throughout Maryland.

The Community Schools [website](#) of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future states, “Community schools serve as hubs that bring families, communities, and partners together to remove barriers to learning.” Providing site-based resources determined by an individualized Needs Assessment, families can access services that address and support physical, dental, and mental health; food scarcity; tutoring needs; mentoring and more.

Homelessness has long been recognized as one of the most disruptive events impacting children’s long-term educational success. In a [presentation](#) to the State Board of Education in 2021, then-Superintendent Mohammed Choudhury detailed its persistence, range, and impact on Maryland’s students as compared to their continuously-housed peers. The data he presented showed gaps of 23%-25% in English Language Arts and Math proficiency, a 31% increase in chronic absenteeism, a 17% lower graduation rate, and a 20% higher drop-out rate for students who have experience disrupted housing. Homelessness is enumerated as one of the major Adverse Childhood Events (ACE).

Adding rental and utility support as a resource to the many others that Community School families can access is an important first step in supporting our students and narrowing these gaps and reaching our goal of providing a world-class education for all Maryland students.

We ask that you return a favorable report for HB 428.

Respectfully,

Gail L. Martin, LCSW-C; Legislative Committee Liaison, Social Work in Schools Committee
NASW-MD