

Comments SB385

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this legislation. Frederick County Public Schools has experienced significant enrollment growth over the past five years. From FY2020 to FY2024, our enrollment has grown by 3,853 students. For FY2025, FCPS is projected to add more than 1,000 students. To quantify that level a little differently, the percentage of student enrollment in FCPS is the highest in the State and is more than four times greater than the next fastest growing county.

Supporting the needs of our students is exceptionally challenging while experiencing this level of growth because school funding is currently based upon the previous year's enrollment. Our FY25 revenue is based upon the number of students from SY2023-2024. For a system experiencing significant growth, this creates a funding lag. School systems must plan for the students they expect to arrive when we open our doors in the fall. Beyond the classroom, growth requires additional staff for maintenance and operations, payroll, and human resources in order to meet the needs of our schools and students.

Providing an escalation factor that captures the enrollment from previous years will assist in mitigating the funding lag currently enshrined in the state's funding formula. The measured approach allows for the funding escalation to be tempered by any fluctuations in growth school systems experience.