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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
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**Testimony in Support of SB161 Community Schools – Alterations**

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future in 2021 served as a reimagining of the public educational system within the state. Part of its provisions incorporated additional funding and support for community schools, a type of public educational institution designed to fulfill the needs of the parents and students residing in the district in question.

Community schools have existed for decades within the state of Maryland and have a proven track record of success. Currently, the State of Maryland has 454 community schools, with Baltimore City and Prince George's Counties having the greatest number of 152 and 109 respectively serving primarily Black students. These schools are a great asset in that they allow students to receive any additional support that they or their parents may require, and their flexibility allows for each community to have its say in how the educational institution should be run. Although the program has been successful thus far, multiple shortcomings need to be addressed including key features of a successful community school, the lack of program evaluation for effectiveness, and no publicly available community school implementation plans.

With the increase in the education budget for this year, it is not unreasonable to ask for a portion of these funds to be diverted to help alleviate the worse outcomes that students in poorer districts face, including but not limited to, higher absenteeism rates, lower grades, higher dropout rates, and other factors.

Continuing to invest in community schools which already led to an increase in the amount of free or reduced lunches that students receive according to the Maryland State Education Association as well as other improvements. We can hope to reduce the inequity that minority students face by supporting this bill by allocating more funding and correcting the shortcomings of existing policy.

For these reasons, I seek a favor committee report on SB161.