



**Testimony in SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS of  
Senate Bill 756: Primary and Secondary Education – School Safety and Student Well Being –  
Examination of Policies and Funding**

**Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

**Position: Favorable with Amendments**

February 28, 2024

Strong Schools Maryland envisions a Maryland with a World class education system, defined and codified through the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The Blueprint contains Pillar Five, Governance and Accountability, which recognizes the importance of holding governing infrastructures accountable for their impact on student populations. Furthermore, the Blueprint prioritizes student population health and wellbeing, moving away from harmful, punitive policy in approaching school safety. Transparency proceeds accountability; in order to be held accountable, an organization must be honest in their analysis of their safety practices.

Senate Bill 756 upholds a dedication to transparency when analyzing school safety through the Maryland Center for School Safety, the State Department of Education, and Interagency Commission on School Construction as these organizations directly impact the physical safety of Maryland's student population. The proposed legislation dictates that these agencies work together to perform joint reviews every two years to analyze school safety. As a result, they will be mandated to give the local school systems guidelines designed to improve school safety. Strong Schools Maryland supports bills that increase our dedication to transparency in all aspects of the school system.

While Strong Schools Maryland endorses this bill's dedication to transparency, accountability, and improvement of school safety, we propose amending the fiscal aspect of the bill that would require an additional allocation of \$20,000,000 in the annual budget to fund these efforts before collecting the results of this analysis. Strong Schools Maryland urges the General Assembly to consider how this preemptive analysis can inform us how to better invest in restorative practices instead of investing this additional money into "school safety". According to the Center for American Progress, policy makers must invest in evidence based solutions instead of reactionary spending that only makes the public *feel* better.<sup>1</sup>

Too often, these resources are utilized to implement greater police presence, armed staff, and more stringent security measures. As a result, we are cautious to allocate greater funding before the Center, the Department, and the Interagency Commission conduct these school reviews defined by the proposed legislation and collect recommendations of how to improve safety in an efficacious manner.

**For these reasons, we urge a favorable report contingent on removing the funding portion of Senate Bill 756.**

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<sup>1</sup> [Smart Investments for Safer Schools](#)