



**Testimony in WITH AMENDMENTS of HB 490  
Education - The Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Revisions**

Committee on Appropriations  
February 24, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Barnes and Members of the Committee,

CASA is **pleased to offer favorable testimony with amendments in strong support of HB 490, Education - The Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Revisions.** We support HB 490 as a general Blueprint revisions bill. The legislation makes important technical and timeline adjustments across multiple areas of implementation. However, several provisions require guardrails to protect funding stability and equity for students.

CASA is a national powerhouse organization building power and improving the quality of life in working-class: Black, Latino/a/e, Afro-descendent, Indigenous, and Immigrant communities. With a membership of over 190,000 members, CASA creates change with its power-building model blending human services, community organizing, and advocacy to serve the full spectrum of the needs, dreams, and aspirations of members. CASA provides multiple education services to youth and adult immigrants in Maryland including college and career readiness, workforce and life skills ESOL, and vocational training.

As a proud member of the Blueprint Coalition, CASA strongly supports the Blueprint for Maryland's Future: its transformational potential for Maryland's schools, its focus on equity, and its goal of closing achievement gaps so that all students can leave school prepared for postsecondary education, careers, and life in our communities. CASA supports HB 490 which provides for necessary revisions to the Blueprint, including needed flexibility for the Concentration of Poverty Grant Program, an expanded definition of wraparound services in Community Schools, and an extension of the currently used approaches for calculating compensatory education enrollment. However, we respectfully request that the following amendments be adopted to further maximize the bill's equitable impact on the academic trajectory of Maryland's multilingual learners (MLLs).

- **Compensatory Education Methodology (amendment):** HB 490 extends the current time period during which the State uses existing approaches to calculate compensatory education enrollment. CASA supports extending the current approach in the short term to avoid disruption. Our concern is what comes next. The bill pushes out the "hold harmless" timing, but it does not put clear statute around how the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) will decide a new Compensatory Education methodology, what data will be used,

or how stakeholders will be engaged. We are proposing an amendment requiring the MSDE, in collaboration with the AIB, to submit a recommendation to the Maryland General Assembly by October 1st, 2026 on whether and how to update the compensatory education enrollment methodology and requiring a structured and transparent development process. This amendment does not change the current formula, does not reduce funding, and does not automatically implement a new method. It requires consultation with every local school system and key agencies, meaningful stakeholder engagement, at least one statewide public input opportunity, rolling public posting of the process and materials, and a final recommendation that includes an equity impact analysis disaggregated by race, ethnicity, income, disability status, and language status. If MSDE and the AIB recommend no update, the current methodology continues automatically for the next fiscal year, with a detailed justification required. This is the right guardrail for a high-stakes funding methodology that affects every county and the students with the greatest needs, including MLLs.

- **Prekindergarten Tier I Inclusion (amendment):** In 2023, the AIB recommended expanding the Tier I definition to students with disabilities and MLLs, and the General Assembly adopted that expansion for fiscal years 2024 through 2026. As a result, children between 300% and 600% of the federal poverty level who also have disabilities or come from multilingual homes may enroll in full-day prekindergarten and be counted as Tier I for funding purposes through the 2025–2026 school year. That statutory authority is set to expire. Therefore, CASA seeks an amendment to extend this timeline. If no action is taken this session, the statute will sunset and these students will no longer be counted as Tier I, which could significantly affect access and funding stability in many districts. Extending the timeline maintains continuity for students with disabilities and MLLs while giving the State time to evaluate the fiscal and policy implications responsibly.
- **Post-College and Career Readiness and Dual Enrollment Limits:** HB 490 extends the statutory authority of the State Board and the AIB to require a minimum number and type of dual enrollment courses under the post-college and career readiness pathway. Although intended to ensure baseline access, minimum requirements frequently operate as ceilings in practice. When the State sets a floor, some districts align to that floor and do not expand further. Over time, that dynamic can slow progress and entrench disparities in access across counties. Students in lower-wealth districts, multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and students from low-income backgrounds may be more likely to be limited to the minimum offering, while students in more resourced districts continue to benefit from broader and more robust dual enrollment opportunities. If the State continues this authority, it should pair it with strong monitoring and public reporting to ensure dual enrollment access grows beyond the minimum and expands equitably across student groups and jurisdictions.

HB 490 includes important Blueprint revisions. With a transparent statutory process for any changes to compensatory education funding, continuity for Tier I prekindergarten students, and safeguards to ensure dual enrollment minimums do not limit opportunity, this bill can strengthen equity and stability during Blueprint implementation.

**For these reasons, CASA respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report with amendments on House Bill 490.**