

## **Testimony in Favor With Amendments**

Senate Bill 311 – Blueprint for Maryland’s Future – Revisions

Chair, Vice Chair, and Distinguished Members of the Committee,

Good afternoon.

My name is The Honorable, Dr. Cashenna A. Cross, and I appear before you as a municipal leader, United States Air Force veteran, community advocate, and lifelong supporter of policies that place children at the center of Maryland’s future.

I offer testimony in Favor With Amendments to Senate Bill 311.

Maryland made a promise through the Blueprint — a promise that education would not simply prepare students to pass tests, but to live productive, stable, and meaningful lives. This bill continues that work by strengthening career pathways, expanding wraparound services, and modernizing how we prepare educators and students for a changing economy.

The expansion of Career and Technical Education is particularly important. Across our municipalities, we see young people searching not just for education, but for direction. When students can graduate with an industry credential, an apprenticeship, or a clear pathway into a high-wage profession, we reduce poverty before it begins. We build stability before crisis occurs.

Equally important is the recognition that learning does not happen in isolation. Behavioral health supports, tutoring, family engagement, and community partnerships acknowledge what many of us already know — a child cannot succeed academically if basic needs remain unmet.

However, progress must not come at the expense of accountability or local voice.

First, the removal of technology reporting requirements risks masking ongoing inequities in broadband access and digital learning tools. The digital divide did not disappear after the pandemic, and transparency remains essential to closing opportunity gaps.

Second, workforce alignment must include consultation with local governments and municipal leaders. Cities and towns are often the first to see shifts in employment trends, emerging industries, and workforce shortages. Our perspective strengthens implementation rather than slowing it.

Third, while flexibility in teacher certification can help address shortages, safeguards must ensure that classrooms remain supported by prepared and effective educators. Innovation and quality must move together.

Finally, limitations placed on dual enrollment opportunities should include clear reporting to ensure students are not unintentionally denied accelerated pathways to college and career success.

Members of the Committee, this legislation moves Maryland forward. With thoughtful amendments, it can do so while preserving transparency, equity, and community partnership.

Our responsibility is not simply to educate students for today, but to prepare them for a future where they can lead, work, and thrive with dignity.

I respectfully urge a Favorable Report With Amendments on Senate Bill 311.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honorable, Dr. Cashenna A. Cross  
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