



**Testimony in SUPPORT of
House Bill 534: Nonpublic Schools – Transcripts – Prohibition on Punitive Measures Related to Student
Debt
Ways and Means Committee**

Position: Favorable

February 18, 2026

At Strong Schools Maryland, we work to support the faithful implementation and full funding of the promises legislated through the landmark Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The Blueprint envisions a public education system where all students can feel safe and supported to learn and thrive in their school community. It was designed to specifically address systemic inequities that disproportionately impact historically marginalized communities. As a result, **Strong Schools Maryland offers favorable testimony in support of HB 534 - Nonpublic Schools – Transcripts – Prohibition on Punitive Measures Related to Student Debt** which aims to protect students from punitive measures that disproportionately impact those experiencing financial hardship by prohibiting non public schools that participate in State funded education programs from refusing to provide or take punitive actions in regard to a students' owed debt to the school.

The rising costs tied to k-12 education can create significant barriers for families, especially those who are low income. The current practice of withholding transcripts as a form of debt collection places an unnecessary and punitive burden on students, unrelated to academic performance, which can prohibit the student's continuity of learning. This proposed bill ensures that students are not penalized for financial issues or debts that are beyond their control or if they are not able to resolve their financial obligations.

HB534 prohibits nonpublic schools that participate in state funded education programs from

- Refusing to issue a transcript for outstanding debt
- Charging higher fees for obtaining a transcript because of debt
- Providing less favorable treatment to transcript requests based on debt
- Using the withholding of transcripts as a means of debt collection

These provisions would ensure that students are able to access their academic records that they would need to pursue job opportunities, higher education, or transitions from one school to another. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future envisions a school system where students can achieve higher education, career pathways, and transitions between schools. Many of these opportunities require transcripts and withholding of these necessary documents in punitive response to financial obligations

For these reasons, Strong Schools Maryland urges the House Appropriations and Ways and Means Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 534.

Please contact Kenzie Funk at kenzie@strongschoolsmaryland.org for additional questions.