



**Testimony for
House Bill 202: Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2023**

**Appropriations Committee
Position: Favorable with Amendments**

February 28, 2023

Strong Schools Maryland is a network of education advocates dedicated to ensuring the full funding and faithful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. As a member of the Fair Funding Coalition, we believe that ensuring all Marylanders pay their fair share is the first step to meeting our constitutional obligations to public school students across the state. **We stand in support of House Bill 202, and urge the committee to continue exploring amendment options that would generate additional revenue to fully fund the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.**

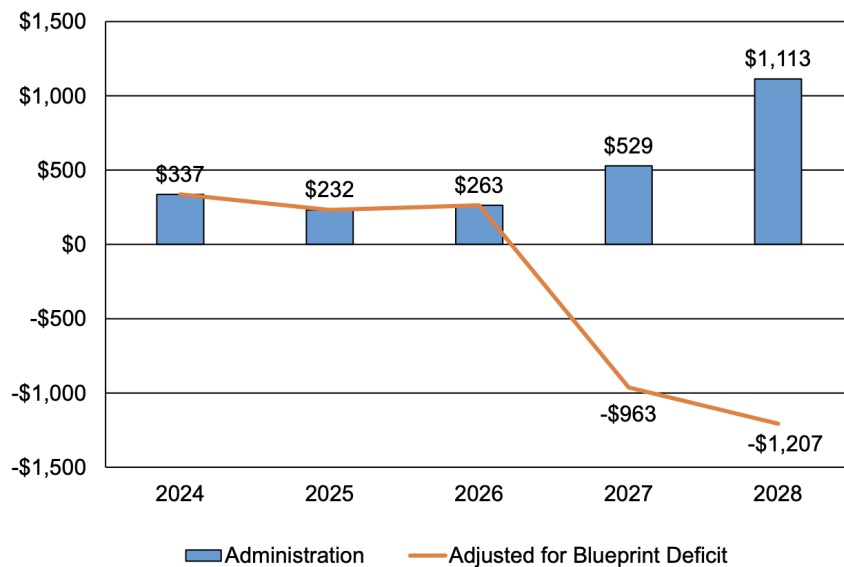
The Blueprint envisions a World-Class system of public schools for our state's students. This vision, of an investment in our public education system and a re-imagining of what is possible for our students to achieve, requires investment. This Legislative Session, Strong Schools Maryland is devoting time and resources to supporting efforts of dedicating available funding surpluses and generating future revenue for long-term Blueprint funding.

Despite clear language in House Bill 1300, updated language in House Bill 1372, and innovative approaches by the General Assembly, the future of the Blueprint Fund is in jeopardy. This committee must once again hold the line to ensure the Blueprint is implemented with fidelity, while ensuring no funding deficits delay true implementation and outcome accountability for the success of this investment in our students and schools.

Maryland has now begun including Medicaid data in its direct certification process, which increases eligibility for students and their schools to access certain resources, like free and reduced priced meals. This new method has identified a massive blindspot in our counting of students in poverty. **The State has been missing nearly 1 in 9 students** all across Maryland, with especially large concentrations in Montgomery, Anne Arundel, and Prince George’s counties.¹ The official count is 110,501 students, and as a result, translates to more than \$1.6 billion in additional compensatory education costs. Updated projections now cast the Blueprint fund in deficit beginning in Fiscal Year 2027.

Maryland has a lot of ground to make up for, primarily due to the history of horribly underfunded high-poverty schools. This is why the budget put forth, as well as this Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act, are some of the most important documents this committee will review this Session.

General Fund Structural Budget Outlook
Fiscal 2024-2028
(\$ in Millions)



In passing the Blueprint, the General Assembly made the commitment to students: five pillars to transform public education, through equitable practices, so that Maryland’s student achievement would be competitive with not just every state in the country, but with the highest achieving countries in the world. Full funding of the Blueprint is key to achieving this goal. We implore this committee to use this Legislative Session to explore innovative strategies

¹ [DLS 2023 Fiscal Briefing](#)

to fund the Blueprint to completion. If no actions are taken to fully fund the law this Session, use the interim to seek out experts and create partnerships that can inform sustainable revenue generation.

Keep the promise you made to our state's children to lead successful, self-determined lives through the foundation of Maryland's World-Class education.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on House Bill 202, with an amendment to incorporate more funds allocated to the Blueprint fund.

For more information, contact:

Maddie Long

maddie@strongschoolsmaryland.org