



**Testimony in amended support of  
Senate Bill 913: Education – Community Eligibility Provision Schools and  
Prekindergarten Enrollment and Funding – Alterations**

**House Ways and Means Committee  
Position: Favorable with Amendments**

March 29, 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. **Strong Schools Maryland urges a consideration of amendments to restore Senate Bill 913 to its original language.**

The passage of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future began a new period in Maryland's journey to achieve educational equity, especially with regard to early learning. The Blueprint established publicly-funded, full day pre-kindergarten in the state so that all children are ready to learn and be successful when they enter kindergarten. This policy was designed with equity by using a tier system to ensure families with the most need receive program benefits first. However, in its development, the State left out key details in categorization of Tier I children and missed some of our most vulnerable populations: children with disabilities, homeless youths, and children from homes where English is not the primary spoken language.

The Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) requested legislation to make technical corrections to this issue, but the bill has since been amended to remove two crucial groups in Tier I – children with disabilities and children from homes where English is not the primary spoken language – both of whom have historically demonstrated the need for prekindergarten the most. The bill as

amended also makes concerning changes to requirements for prekindergarten programs and community eligibility provision schools.

Senate Bill 913, as amended, would:

- Alter the law to *only add* homeless youths into the definition of “Tier I” children, striking out two *intended* groups of children;
- Include children with disabilities and children who are from homes in which English is not the primary spoken language into the 2022–2023 school year priority slots;
- Remove important prekindergarten provider and program requirements, such as evidence-based curricula, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction methods, and program evaluation for continuous improvement.

As the original [Fiscal and Policy Note](#) suggests, the expenditures that are incurred by adding all three groups of children to Tier I starting in Fiscal Year 2024 would be covered by special funds through Fiscal Year 2026. This is with February projections and does not include the robust investment in the Blueprint fund that the Legislature has allocated in the proposed budget. True prioritization requires investing in the children who will benefit the most: children designated as Tier I.

Strong Schools Maryland is committed to fighting for the full-scale, long-term implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future and its sustainable funding at the state and local levels for the duration of implementation. This can only occur through open engagement and steadfast commitment to listen and engage with stakeholders. This bill, as amended, denies access to a strong start to a World Class Education to children from families learning English and children with disabilities. We urge this legislature to reaffirm its promise to Maryland’s children and implement corrections that advance equity, as that is true alignment with the Blueprint’s vision.

**For these reasons, we urge the committee to restore the original language of Senate Bill 913.**

*For more information, contact Maddie Long:  
maddie@strongschoolsmaryland.org*