



**Testimony in support of
Senate Bill 266: Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports
– Membership – Alteration**

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

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. We advocate for legislative and regulatory policy changes to further educational equity and build the technical capacity of everyday Marylanders to hold state and local officials accountable to their responsibilities. **Strong Schools Maryland urges a favorable vote on House Bill 306: Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports – Membership – Alteration.**

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future envisions a World-Class system of public schools for our state's students. The Blueprint created the Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports to support the development of school-community partnerships to meet student behavioral health needs in a holistic, nonstigmatized manner.

Under current law, the Consortium consists of State representatives and members of other Maryland entities, including one teacher, one social worker, one school psychologist, and more. SB 266 would add a school counselor, designated by the Maryland School Counselor Association, to the Consortium. In doing so, it would fix a minor Blueprint oversight and ensure Maryland counselors are accurately represented.

School counselors play a crucial role in providing a high-quality education experience for Maryland students. The importance of a counselor's voice cannot be overstated, nor can the assurance of a counselor representative who has experience in schools in high-need areas. The counselor member will be aligned with what community supports their students need, and in turn, can provide a perspective that is reflective of the State's needs. This will ultimately improve the quality of school-community partnerships that the Blueprint tasked it to support.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 266

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