



Policy Foundation of Maryland

Committee: Budget and Taxation, Education, Energy, and the Environment, Appropriations, Ways and Means

Testimony on: SB0370 - Community Schools - Rental Assistance for Community School Families Program and Fund - Establishment

Sponsor(s): Senator Hettleman

Organization: Policy Foundation of Maryland, Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Sarahia Benn (CEO/President) PFOM

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: March 26, 2023 1PM

Chair and Members of the Committee,

The Policy Foundation of Maryland (PFOM) is a statewide grassroots organization focused on advocating for legislation and policies that address the needs of Black, Brown, marginalized, low-income communities, veterans, and improve health and education outcomes. These communities, particularly those in rural areas, have faced historical and ongoing systemic challenges and are multiply marginalized. Investing in their well-being is essential for a more just and equitable Maryland.

My name is Sarahia Benn, CEO/President of PFOM and representative of the Maryland Legislative Coalition, a non-profit organization with over 30,000 members across the state. We are a dedicated group firmly committed to supporting education and the well-being of all children.

Supporting SB0370 - Investing in Stability for Student Success

The PFOM strongly supports Senate Bill 0370, which establishes the Rental Assistance fund for students whose families may be struggling and this will ensure they will not continue to struggle with housing insecurity. We commend Senator Hettleman for sponsoring this critical legislation.

Addressing the Root Cause of Educational Disruption

While Concentration of Poverty Grants provide valuable resources for community schools serving low-income families, a looming eviction can disrupt a child's education. This program addresses this root cause by providing rental assistance to families at risk of homelessness and housing insecurity.



Stable housing is essential for student success, allowing them to focus on learning and thriving in school.

Early Intervention and Comprehensive Support

The proposed coordinator role within each community school is a strength of the program. By identifying families facing housing insecurity early – through overdue rent notices, unemployment, or unsafe living conditions – timely intervention can prevent homelessness and its devastating consequences.

Beyond Rent: A Holistic Approach

The inclusion of utility assistance, back rent/utility payment options, and penalty/fine coverage demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the financial burdens families facing eviction may experience. This holistic approach provides a safety net and a pathway towards long-term stability.

Shared Values: Investing in Maryland's Future

Our members across Maryland understand the struggles faced by many families to afford basic necessities. We strongly support the state's efforts to ensure secure housing for all Marylanders. Stable housing fosters a positive learning environment for children, leading to a better-educated and more productive future workforce for our state.

This program offers a strategic investment in our children's education and the overall well-being of Maryland families.

For these compelling reasons, I urge an **FAVORABLE REPORT** on **SB0370**.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarahia Benn
(Policy Foundation of Maryland, Maryland Legislative Coalition)

(Dedicated to Black History All Year Round)

“I don’t want to force myself into an institution that doesn’t seem to appreciate what I bring..”

[--Hannah Jones](#)