



**Testimony in OPPOSITION of  
House Bill 791: Operating Budget - Funding - Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students**

**Appropriations Committee**

**Position: Unfavorable**

February 20, 2024

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, which calls for an equitable investment into the Maryland education system. **Strong Schools Maryland stands in strong opposition to House Bill 791**, which mandates funding increases for Maryland's private school voucher program. The bill proposes no dedicated revenue source for its FY 2026 through FY 2029 appropriations mandate, coinciding with the imminent depletion of the Blueprint Special Fund.

Despite commitments made to Maryland students through the codification of Chapter 36 and innovative funding approaches by the General Assembly and Administration, the future of the Blueprint Fund is currently in jeopardy. This committee must once again hold the line to ensure the Blueprint is implemented with fidelity while allocating funding sufficient for the out-year provisions of the law. BOOST is sufficiently funded in the current budget to serve existing students in the program—further allocations unnecessarily put public dollars behind private institutions.

The Department of Legislative Service's *own analysis* defines the impact of this bill at the local level: **Beginning as early as FY 2027, local school system revenues and local government expenditures for public schools may decrease.**

In passing the Blueprint, the General Assembly made a promise to future generations: that their public schools would be fully funded and among the best in the world. Full funding of the Blueprint is key to achieving this goal. We urge this committee to use the Legislative Session to focus its attention on innovative strategies to fund the Blueprint—like the Fair Share Maryland Act (HB 1007) and reject irresponsible efforts to distract the body from its generational commitment.

**For these reasons, we strongly urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 791.**

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