



**Senate Bill 370/House Bill 428
Appropriations/Ways & Means – February 6, 2024
Position: Favorable with Amendments**

The Maryland Out of School Time Network (MOST) is a statewide organization dedicated to closing opportunity gaps by expanding both the quantity and quality of afterschool and summer learning opportunities for school-aged young people. MOST serves as the backbone organization for the Maryland Coalition for Community Schools. The Maryland Coalition for Community Schools, founded in 2016, advocates for student and family success by leading the charge to expand the Community School Model in Maryland. The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) advocates for adequate funding, equitable policies, and transparent accountability statewide.

Community School Coordinators across Maryland, as part of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future requirements, conduct needs assessments for their schools, the students, families, and the surrounding communities. A common theme across schools and jurisdictions is that one of the top challenges facing families experiencing poverty is stable housing. Many of the programs that received boosts from federal recovery dollars are expiring. Often, families also need help navigating complicated systems to access support. HB 428 directly answers this challenge by creating a fund through which Community School Coordinators can directly assist families. The addition of \$10 Million dollars may not cover the full need or demand but can make a significant difference school by school. This strategy can also address student mobility, affecting school climate and student achievement.

MOST and MD4CS strongly support HB 428, and we have a few suggested amendments to strengthen the bill. Because housing programs are within its expertise, we believe Maryland's Department of Housing and Community Development should administer the housing assistance grants under this legislation. Additionally, we believe MSDE and MDHCD should collaborate to provide training for Community School Coordinators on the landscape of available housing support programs to help families qualify and access existing support pathways. Lastly, for school districts that don't currently have Community Schools, we believe this fund should be accessible through the School District's homeless services liaison. We urge the committee to provide a favorable report with amendments for HB 428 and thank Delegate Stewart for sponsoring this bill.

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