

Clarence C. Crawford President, State Board of Education

BILL:	HB0428	DATE:	March 26, 2024
SUBJECT:	Community Schools - Rental Assistance for Community School Families Program and Fund - Establishment	COMMITTEE:	Senate Budget and Taxation
POSITION:	Support with Amendments		
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The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) extend their support for House Bill (HB) 428 – *Community Schools - Rental Assistance for Community School Families Program and Fund – Establishment* with amendments to clarify the role of the community school coordinator.

## HB 428

HB 428 proposes a rental assistance program with its own eligibility criteria and other requirements. For families identified as eligible, the Rental Assistance for Community School Families Program will provide rental and utility payments directly to the landlord or utility company. The support may be provided for up to 12 months with the opportunity of an extension of three months if the criteria are met. Payments will be made directly to the landlord or utility company on behalf of an eligible family. The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development is tasked with management of the new rental assistance program.

## **Community Schools**

In FY 2024, there are 454 community schools in 22 LEAs receiving Concentration of Poverty Grants. There are three LEAs with 40 or more community schools. As more schools become eligible for Concentration of Poverty funds, the total number of community schools in Maryland is projected to exceed 550 by 2027. Community schools are guided by a community-based needs assessment and are charged with building effective local partnerships. The Community School Coordinator of the school works to bring needed services to the school to support students and their families.

The Community School Coordinator's duties include building and maintaining mechanisms for community input, developing the needs assessment, identifying services, facilitating the provision of services in the

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school, coordinating with school leadership, monitoring implementation, and monitoring the expenditures of the Concentration of Poverty Grant that supports the Community school activities.

With the current management responsibilities of the Community Schools Coordinator, it would not be possible to take on the determination of eligibility and the facilitation of direct payments. The Community School Coordinator cannot facilitate payments for a program managed by a State Agency. MSDE believes the addition of this responsibility will compromise the coordinator's ability to perform their existing duties and serve their school community in a maximally effective manner.

## **Proposed Amendments (Third Reader)**

Page 3, lines 30-31, and Page 4, lines 1-2, in place of the removed language, insert:

(IV) Providing information about the availability of the rental assistance program to families, including eligibility requirements, and how to apply.

Page 7, strike lines 12-15 and replace with:

(F) The Community Schools Coordinator, a local school, or a local school system shall provide verification of student enrollment, and inclusion in the compensatory education enrollment, or eligibility for McKinney Vento Assistance.

With these amendments, MSDE supports the creation of the Rental Assistance for Community School Families Fund.

The State Board requests that the committee consider this information on **HB 428**. Please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne, Executive Director of Government Affairs, Education Policy, and Government Relations, at <u>Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov</u> or at 410-767-0504 or Zach Hands, Executive Director of the State Board, at <u>Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov</u> or at 443-915-6094, if you would like any additional information.