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Senate Bill 429 – Excellence in Maryland Public Schools Act
Budget and Taxation Committee/Education, Energy and the Environment
February 19, 2025

UNFAVORABLE

Good afternoon, Chairs Guzzone and Feldman, Vice Chairs Kagan and Rosapepe, and members of the committees. The Baltimore Teachers Union stands in strong opposition to Senate Bill 429, which proposes significant cuts to the education funding promised under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

The Blueprint represents a historic, bipartisan commitment to investing in our students, our teachers, and the future of our communities. By delaying and reducing this critical funding, SB 429 undermines the very foundation of that promise and puts our most vulnerable students at further risk. Our schools cannot afford broken commitments—especially not when these investments are designed to close achievement gaps, address generational inequities, and provide essential services to children who need them most.

One of the most concerning aspects of this bill is the delay in funding for Community Schools and the Concentration of Poverty grants, which are lifelines for many of Baltimore's students. These grants fund essential services such as mental health care, after-school programming, and multilingual support—services that directly impact student success and well-being.

Across Baltimore City, funding through Concentration of Poverty grant allows schools to establish school-based mental health programs. These programs have provided critical support to students coping with trauma and helped improve both attendance and academic engagement. If SB 429 passes, the expansion of this program to serve additional students will be indefinitely delayed, leaving vulnerable children without the help they need.

At dozens of schools in our district, after-school tutoring and enrichment programs, funded through these grants, have led to measurable improvements in literacy and math proficiency for multilingual learners. With funding cuts, these programs will either be drastically reduced or eliminated, robbing students of the personalized support that has helped them thrive.

Furthermore, the decision to cut these funds disproportionately affects communities that have experienced decades of disinvestment due to racially discriminatory policies and practices. The Blueprint was crafted, in part, to address these historic inequities and provide a pathway toward educational justice. Rolling back this funding perpetuates the systemic barriers that have long denied Black and Brown students access to the resources necessary for academic and personal success.

SB 429 is more than a budgetary adjustment; it is a retreat from Maryland's commitment to educational equity. We urge you to reject this bill and reaffirm your dedication to providing all Maryland students—regardless of zip code, race, or income level—the resources they need to succeed. Our children's futures depend on the investments we make today.

The Baltimore Teachers Union respectfully requests an unfavorable report on SB 429.