

**Testimony in OPPOSITION of
Senate 429: Excellence in Maryland Public Schools Act**

Budget and Taxation Committee/Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: Oppose

February 12, 2025

My name is Laurie Chin, and I am an educator from Ellicott City. I am submitting this testimony **in strong opposition to Senate Bill 429**, which would significantly cut promised education funding under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. This bill undermines the investments our state has committed to making in our students, our teachers, and the future of our communities.

At a time when Maryland is experiencing a teacher shortage, delaying collaborative time grants will prevent teachers from receiving necessary professional development and planning time. These grants help educators collaborate, improve instruction, and better support students. Without them, schools will struggle to retain talented teachers. Collaborative time is crucial for Speech-language pathologists and others who work with students with complex communication needs. It is vital that we help all staff understand how to support student communication in the classroom including but not limited to: assisting in identifying vocabulary needs for academic content areas, training on student specific augmentative/alternative communication systems, training on modifications needed to academic materials to allow students to access the curriculum, and ways to be inclusive in their presentation to all student so as not to accidentally exclude students with complex communication needs. I need additional collaborative time to train staff on how to use Assistive Technology to support student success in communicating their thoughts and ideas in the classroom. Teachers, support staff and SLPs need collaborative time to program devices so students have robust vocabulary and systems that support them not only during academics, but also for social engagement with peers. Teachers and support staff need time to learn to support students using assistive technology such as speech generating devices and time to modify their lessons in order to allow all students to access materials and demonstrate their knowledge.

Maryland made a commitment to improving education through the Blueprint, but SB429 weakens these efforts when schools need support the most. Rather than cutting funding, the legislature should uphold its promise to students, educators, and families by maintaining the investments that were pledged.

I urge you to reject Senate Bill 429 and prioritize the future of Maryland's students - prioritize generating progressive revenue through the passage of Fair Share Maryland. Cutting funding now will have long-term consequences that harm not just our schools, but our communities as a whole. Please vote no on SB429 and stand with those who believe in fully funding the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Laurie Chin

Speech-language Pathologist

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