



**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 17, 2025**

On behalf of the Parent and Community Advisory Board (PCAB) of Baltimore City, we are 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 children, our teachers, and the future of our communities.

As parents and community members, we see firsthand the challenges our schools face. We believe every child deserves access to a high-quality education, regardless of their zip code. However, the proposed cuts in SB429 would have devastating consequences for students who already struggle with a lack of resources and support.

Cuts to per-pupil foundation funding will mean fewer resources in classrooms, including essential instructional materials, teacher salaries, and critical student services. Schools already stretched thin will have to make impossible choices—larger class sizes, reduced staff, and fewer enrichment opportunities. As parents, we worry about how these funding cuts will affect the quality of education our children receive. If our schools cannot retain experienced teachers or provide the necessary learning materials, our children will fall further behind.

Additionally, delays in funding for community schools will widen the achievement gap and leave our most vulnerable students without necessary support systems. Many of our schools serve students who rely on mental health services, after-school programs, and multilingual support funded through Concentration of Poverty grants. These programs are lifelines for families in Baltimore City, and postponing their funding means children will be left without the services they need to thrive.

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

We urge you to **vote no on SB429** and stand with the families and communities who believe in fully funding the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The decisions made today will impact an entire generation of Maryland students—**please prioritize their future.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Parent and Community Advisory Board (PCAB), Baltimore City

Dear Governor Moore,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Corey Witherspoon, and I am a member of the Parent and Community Advisory Board (PCAB). I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the proposed budget cuts to the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and to urge your continued commitment to fully funding this critical initiative.

Maryland students have made significant progress due to the Blueprint's impact, and it is essential that we maintain this momentum. While I recognize the state's \$3 billion deficit and the difficult fiscal decisions that must be made, reducing Blueprint funding by \$218 million risks undermining the progress we have achieved in education reform. I acknowledge that the proposed budget still allocates \$9.7 billion for K-12 public schools—an increase of \$551 million (6%) from the previous year—but Maryland continues to face pressing challenges, particularly in addressing the severe teacher shortage.

As of January 2025, there is a shortage of 2,000 teachers across Maryland's schools, and approximately 6,000 additional educators hold only conditional certifications. While recent legislative efforts have sought to streamline teacher certification processes, sustained investment through the Blueprint is necessary to recruit and retain qualified educators. Without fully funding these initiatives, Maryland risks falling further behind in addressing its educator pipeline crisis.

Maryland currently ranks 26th nationally in high school graduation rates, 42nd in NAEP test scores, and 25th in NAEP reading scores. These rankings underscore the need for continued investment in education rather than reductions. However, the positive impact of the Blueprint is evident—Maryland ranks 11th in college readiness, demonstrating that targeted reforms are working to prepare students for future success.

Additionally, Maryland ranks 7th nationally in providing services for students with special needs, a testament to the effectiveness of our current investments. The Blueprint has played a crucial role in ensuring that schools have the resources to support students requiring accommodations, allowing them to bring in professionals and specialists to enhance educational outcomes. Reducing funding now could jeopardize these gains and negatively impact some of our most vulnerable students.

Another growing challenge is the increasing population of English Language Learners (ELLs) in Maryland. Currently, ELLs make up 10% of the student population—nearly 9,000 students—and the demand for English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers continues to rise. Many schools are struggling to find ESOL teachers, leaving students without the necessary support. The Blueprint's investment in these programs is critical to ensuring that ELL students receive the resources they need to succeed.

Furthermore, community schools, a vital component of the Blueprint, provide holistic support to students and their families by integrating academics with health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement. The Blueprint facilitates this transformation through Concentration of Poverty Grants, and the goal is to convert nearly one-third of Maryland public schools to the community school model by 2027. These schools are essential in addressing both academic and non-academic barriers to student success, and their continued expansion should remain a priority.

Governor Moore, I greatly appreciate your dedication to balancing Maryland's budget while prioritizing education. However, I urge you to explore alternative areas for budget reductions to ensure that Maryland's students continue to thrive. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future represents an investment in the long-term success of our children, our workforce, and our state's prosperity.

Thank you for your time and leadership. I look forward to your continued support of Maryland's students and educators.

Respectfully,  
Corey Witherspoon  
Board Member, PCAB