



**Senate Bill 429/House Bill 504 - Excellence in Maryland Public Schools
Joint Hearing:
Senate Budget & Tax/Education, Energy, and the Environment Committees
House Appropriations/Ways & Means Committees
February 19, 2025
Position: UNFAVORABLE**

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 after-school and summer learning programs 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. Free State PTA is a state-level branch of the National PTA, representing parents, teachers, students, and community members. Free State PTA promotes the welfare of children and youth, fostering collaboration between parents, educators, and stakeholders to enhance education and well-being.

The Maryland Out of School Time Network (MOST), the Maryland Coalition for Community Schools, and Free State PTA strongly **oppose SB429/HB504**. This bill threatens critical Blueprint funding for **Collaborative Time, Concentration of Poverty Per Pupil, and the Consortium for Coordinated Supports**, undermining Maryland's commitment to educational equity.

Maryland's **Blueprint for the Future** was a carefully crafted investment to close achievement gaps and support student success. The proposed funding freeze would slash over **\$6.5 billion** from education in just four years, stalling progress and devastating schools—especially Community Schools, where only **half** currently offer afterschool programs despite high demand. Health services, mental health support, and family engagement are all at risk.

This bill also **redirects funds without proper stakeholder engagement** or research, contradicting the rigorous process that made the Blueprint a national model. We support the Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact and flexibility for LEAs to coordinate some of their Concentration of Poverty funds. However, 20% would be a more reasonable cap, in line with Title I standards, to ensure that the maximum funds reach students directly.

Education spending is not causing this year's fiscal shortfalls. The Blueprint is fully funded through 2027. There is no need for hasty changes. Instead, let's commit to a **thorough, evidence-based** evaluation, key stakeholder input, and a comprehensive adequacy study before making irreversible cuts. We can also begin addressing revenue by supporting the full breadth of the Fair Share for Maryland recommendations.

We urge an **Unfavorable Report** on SB429/HB504. **Keep the promise of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.**

**Ellie Mitchell,
Director, MOST/MD4CS**

1500 Union Ave / Suite 2300 Baltimore MD 21211 / 410 374-7692 www.mostnetwork.org