

SB429 | Excellence in Maryland Public Schools Act



Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City

Brook Bourne, *President*
Justin Lyles, *Legislative Affairs Chair*
Qamryn Askew, *Communications Chair*

February 19, 2025

Dear Chair Guzzone, and the Budget & Taxation Committee,

The Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City is Baltimore’s city-wide student government organization, designated as the representative body of the over 70,000 students in Baltimore City Public Schools.

SB429 proposes significant reductions in education through FY33, undermining the commitments set out by the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. These cuts threaten the foundation of equitable education in Maryland and disproportionately harm Baltimore City students—many of whom are beneficiaries of Concentration of Poverty Grants, which **SB429** aims to freeze until FY29.

There is a direct correlation, as consistently shown by empirical evidence¹, that a \$1,000 reduction in funding on a per-pupil basis led to a 3.9% decrease in average test scores in math and reading. By reducing the target per-pupil amount previously set, **SB429** risks replicating these outcomes, ending in similar result.

Despite the already aggressive teacher shortage in Maryland, SB429 delays the implementation of collaborative time for educators—postponing much-needed professional development and structured planning time until FY2030. Collaborative time is critical for refining lesson plans, analyzing student progress, and coordinating interventions, particularly for students with disabilities and multilingual learners. This four-year delay will only worsen teacher burnout and attrition, directly undermining the Blueprint’s goal of elevating the teaching profession.

Additionally, the bill allows Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to withhold up to 50% of Concentration of Poverty Grant funds, diverting resources away from schools and students. This policy weakens the community school model and contradicts the Blueprint’s commitment to educational equity.

SB429 does not offer a sustainable solution to Maryland’s fiscal concerns. Instead, it delays critical investments in education rather than exploring progressive revenue solutions like those proposed in the Fair Share Maryland plan.

Maryland has long been a leader in advancing equitable education policies, but SB429 reverses that progress. History has already shown us the consequences of defunding public education—after passing the Bridge to Excellence Act in the early 2000s, Maryland later abandoned those investments following the 2008 financial crisis. Now, history is repeating itself.

¹Jackson, C.K., Wigger, C., and Xiong, H. (2020). *The Costs of Cutting School Spending: Lessons from the Great Recession*. Education Next, 20(4), 64-71.

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These proposed cuts are not grounded in transparent discussions with stakeholders, nor are they necessary to secure the Blueprint's long-term success. Reducing education funding is not fiscal responsibility—it is a failure to uphold the commitments Maryland has made to its students.

For these reasons, we urge this committee to put forth an unfavorable report on **SB429** and instead support a full and fair funding plan that prioritizes students over short-term budget maneuvering.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Qamryn Askew

Communications Chair, Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City