

TO: Maryland General Assembly, Budget and Taxation Committee
FROM: Bryna and Jason Schaum
SUBJECT: SB 429 / HB 504 - Excellence in Maryland Public Schools Act
POSITION: UNFAVORABLE (OPPOSE)

Dear Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee,
Our names are Bryna and Jason Schaum, and we are submitting this testimony as concerned parents in Carroll County. We urge you to **oppose SB 429 / HB 504 in its current form** and revise the Blueprint to give more local control of the budget that can ensure **adequate and sustainable funding** for all Maryland school districts.

Necessary Adjustments to the Blueprint Formula

While the Blueprint for Maryland's Future aims to improve education, its **current funding structure is not making sense in Carroll County**. In fact, it is delivering devastating consequences to most of the schools in our county that are already severely underfunded. Schools with higher populations of students are **losing desperately needed resources, neglecting laws** like the Maryland Ready to Read act, and have **safety concerns** about classroom sizes. **Carroll County schools need more flexibility in Blueprint funding to help keep it a successful school district**. We are very confused how the Blueprint Expert Review teams came to Carroll County and approved these changes that are wreaking havoc for our overall successful schools.

We agree wholeheartedly with raising teacher salaries. We love the idea of giving additional funding to the students who need it. However, giving 75% of the budget to those students is severely disabling the rest of the students who also need help. Many students struggle in schools with anxiety, reading/math difficulties, and have IEPs and 504s. But they don't qualify as Special Education, and now they will have no supports in their schools, and class sizes at an unsafe level.

The following **adjustments** are necessary to help districts meet their obligations without sacrificing the quality of education:

1. **Increase Per-Pupil Foundation Funding** – Raising the **base foundation amount** will give districts more **discretionary spending** to prevent devastating staff cuts and preserve essential programs. This benefits **all students** and ensures that districts have flexibility to meet their unique needs. You can achieve this by **lowering the 75% Compensatory Education, Multi-Language Learners, and Special Education requirement to 50%**. Moving these funds into Foundation will give districts more flexibility to retain critical support staff that are needed in our schools. This would help Carroll County schools immensely. Current mandates would prompt Carroll County to **cut almost 100 educators and reassign up to 90 educators**, further increasing class sizes and disrupting school communities.
2. **Extend the Blueprint Spending Implementation Timeline** – The current timeline requiring **50% compliance by 2025 and 100% by 2026** places an overwhelming financial burden on local districts that are already struggling to balance their budgets. Extending the implementation over a **four-year span by 25% increments** would allow districts more time to

adjust, secure funding, and implement these changes effectively **without sacrificing essential staff and programs.**

Rather than lowering the per-pupil foundation amount, we urge you to consider these adjustments to **provide school districts with the flexibility they need to meet Blueprint goals without harming students and educators.**

Maryland's students deserve a **fully funded, stable, and effective education system, not one built on staffing crises, and overcrowded classrooms.** Carroll County had excellent public schools, but the Blueprint rigidity will devastate them. We respectfully ask you to stand with educators, parents, and students by ensuring that districts have the resources they need to succeed.

Sincerely,
Bryna and Jason Schaum
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