

TO: Maryland General Assembly, Budget and Taxation Committee

FROM: Carl and Codi Cover

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 Carl and Codi Cover, and we are submitting this testimony as concerned parents in Carroll County. I urge you to **oppose SB 429 / HB 504 in its current form** and instead focus on solutions that ensure **adequate and sustainable funding** for all Maryland school districts. Local constituents have asked for more funding for our schools, but the amount of funding needed to avoid major school cuts will likely not be obtained.

Our district is planning severe cuts to staff and programs to meet Blueprint mandates. This only applies to some schools and my children attend those schools. My second grader was recently diagnosed with dyslexia and without specialists at his school, I am very concerned his needs will not be met on a basic level. I believe the intent of Blueprint was to improve educational outcomes, not cripple some schools while others pool resources. We have been told our reading and math specialists will be cut along with support staff, interventionists, and many others.

Necessary Adjustments to the Blueprint Formula

While the Blueprint for Maryland's Future aims to improve education, its **current funding structure creates significant unintended consequences**. 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.
2. **Examine the Funding Weights** – for Compensatory Education, Multi-Language Learners, and Special Education and reallocating a portion to **Foundation funding** will allow districts to **retain critical support staff** in the immediate. We need to retain reading/math specialists and media center specialists and preserve current essential

programs. 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.

4. **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**.

I 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 budget gaps, staffing crises, and overcrowded classrooms**. I respectfully ask you to stand with educators, parents, and students by ensuring that districts have the resources they need to succeed from our state.

Sincerely,

Carl and Codi Cover
Sykesville, MD 21784